

M E M O I R S

OF

M A R Y,

A

N O V E L.

By Mrs. GUNNING.

IN FIVE VOLUMES.

V O L. V.

L O N D O N:

PRINTED FOR J. BELL, NO. 148, OXFORD-STREET.

MDCCXCHII.

M. T. M. O. I. R. S.

M. A. R. A.

N. O. V. E. L.

IN THE VOICE OF THE

IN THE VOICE OF THE

N. O. V. E. L.



BRITISH MUSEUM

MEMOIRS

M A R Y.

LETTER I.

Lady Auberry to Miss Montague.

May 1, 17—

SYMPATHY, my dearest, is the best friend of your old grand-mother; it spiritually unites me to thee, though our bodies are separated by an awful distance:—Did not my jewel experience the influence of this divine impulse, whilst Lady Jane was unfolding the wonderful mystery of our al-

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tered condition? Yes, surely you must have felt that my soul hovered near its treasure: with my mind's eye I saw thy every emotion, with my mind's ear I heard thy every complaint; thy soft white hands were ardently clasped together, but not in *self-commiseration*, not for our *common* calamity.

—The smile that sits like a glory upon thy countenance, was it not overcast with sadness?—those dear eyes which have darted love beams on my heart since they first opened upon the light of heaven, were they not dimmed, suffused in tears? I can bear it all, you cry, but what will become of my poor grand-mamma? Was I not with thee? Surely I was with thee, Mary; even now my soul is talking to you.—Invention or imagination has nothing to do with the business.—My pen and ink seem almost unnecessary, so plainly does your image stand before me.

Lovely and beloved child, take comfort; let not ill founded fears for me eat out the heart of those pleasures which are still within

in thy reach. Engaging, discreet, gentle, modest, and innocent—believe me, these are no small endowments; the female who possesses them, cannot be called portionless.

Let us say to our misfortunes, You are somewhat troublesome *now*, but we shall conquer you *hereafter*: this is giving them a handsome defiance, and treating with proper contempt the enemies who would crush us. The horrors of an evil-conscience belong to our plunderers; we who are plundered have no right to think ourselves unhappy;—in fact, the value of what we have lost is suppositious, what we retain is of real estimation.—These relations of yours are impoverished rather than enriched by their booty; for a little more dirt, a little more trash than belonged to them, they barter all that is their own, of conscience, honour, and humanity: we will pity them, my child, for the madness of their hasty purchase, and we will also pity the miserable

agents who have been made the instruments of their wicked devices.

They have robbed us of lands, of houses, of money—nothing;—they have left us peace, rectitude, harmony—every thing: it is only the stamp of magnificence that is taken from our coin of happiness; the bullion is still our own, and with less alloy perhaps than if it were of worldly currency.

Your grand mother has a thousand blessings to balance against one disappointment.—It is no small figure in my sum of benefits, that at the age of fourscore I have none of those drawbacks to the rational enjoyments of life, which are common to *many*, and from which *few* are exempted. My intellects are preserved (God be praised!) to glorify the almighty giver and keeper of them. My other senses are not yet fallen into decay,—I am neither blind nor deaf,—I have the use of all my limbs,—I have no bodily ailments, I eat well, I sleep soundly, and what would a reasonable being desire more?

more?—Neither is it a little matter of triumph, when I proudly say to my heart, The *trials* of thy Mary have been *great*, but the *fortitude* of thy Mary is *greater*.

I have hitherto shut my eyes to possibilities, keeping them open to things only that were probable; amongst the former was the loss of your fortune, and nothing could be more apparently probable than the impossibility of its being taken from you.—I have been so totally governed by these erroneous suppositions, as to be wholly careless for the future; when I thought you rich, I should have been ashamed of economy, and held it a vice to spare from those who stood in need of my assistance, to increase your wealth. I now see my fault, but hardly know how to be sorry for it, because it is better in my opinion to be poor by accident, than guilty by design.

I shall set about rectifying my omission, it being now clearly my duty to save that portion of my jointure, which, before this event happened, I thought it my duty to

spend : these savings, together with the few valuables I can call my own, will be enough to satisfy the moderate wishes of my dearest, and to give her independence, though it cannot restore her to affluence.

Covetous souls ask for enough and a little more ; we will be satisfied with enough, view our prospects on all sides, compute our hopes, our fears, our difficulties and our successes, temporarily wait for the ripeness of things, and patiently attend for better fortune ; frivolous pleasures shall not come into our plan of happiness, but we will pursue after rational enjoyments, and hold on with constancy until we overtake them. Good night ! I am going to bed, and shall certainly dream of my dearest.

M. AUBERRY.

Another Word from the Editor.

Lady Jane Petworth's and Miss Montague's answer to the foregoing letters are omitted.—An amiable reader will draw them.

them to his own liking with the pencil of imagination; and one that is unamiable would have no pleasure in perusing them, because they are made up of sentiment, and have nothing of incident belonging to them; in other words, they were calculated to delight a Lady Auberry, but would not tickle the fancy of a Mrs. Oxburn.

MEMOIRS

LETTER II.

Sir Ashton Montague to Mrs. Oxburn.

May 2, 17—

Dear Car.

I Have met with confounded ill-luck since I wrote to you yesterday. I told you then I was setting out to take possession of my new estates; but before I got to the end of my journey, my horse, which never played me a trick since I first crossed him, set off like the devil, and dragged me with one heel in my stirrup, half over a cursed cold dreary common, before my groom got up to disentangle me;—my bones are beat to a jelly, one of my handsome legs is laid open to the knee, and I must stay where I am, in a damned dirty smoky hovel, for a fortnight at least, perhaps longer. The moment I can be put into a carriage, I set
out

out for town, where I shall have better advice if I should want it.—My present surgeon is a comfortable fellow, and tells me there is no danger.—I can bear bruising as well as any man, but I should wince at the sound of danger—I mean *doctors* danger; I am afraid of no other, come it in what shape it may.

Car. was you ever hippish? Do you know any thing about the vapours? I have an odd sort of feeling, and can't make out what it is; no wonder, for I am confined to a bed, where none but a dwarf can lie straight, in a room not ten feet square, half my body swathed with poultices, half covered with plasters, and fed on milk sops like a baby. I do not let my surgeon stir from my side night or day; whilst he is near me, I think I am safe. I find so little diversion in hearing him talk of broken heads and compound fractures, that I should be suffocated with *ennui*, if I did not contrive to sleep away half my time: he forbids me from writing, but in that I choose to dis-

obey his orders. I expect your pity, and would ask for your prayers, only that I believe they will be of no use to me.

The chief part of my business with you at present, dear Car. is not so much to complain of my bodily calamities, as those that hang on my mind, when I think what a devilish spell is come over Auberry, and how fatal the effects of his madness may be to us all.

You know I told you that I had not received a line from him for an age, nor have I written to him, but only by way of information, that our plans were completed, and his shackles knocked off.—Here was news, one would have thought, to make the deaf hear, and the dumb speak; but still he said nothing.—Yesterday I left Bath many hours before the post came in, and ordered one of my grooms to follow with my letters as soon as they were sorted. He heard of my accident on the road, so stopped short on his journey; but I was too ill to open any of the dispatches he brought with him, notwithstanding

withstanding I saw by the direction, though execrably written, that one of them came from Auberry. I am too weak even now, though I have read it twenty times over, to make observations on the contents, but inclose it for your inspection; and when you have done the same, and wondered as much as I have wondered, by what devil he is possessed, go, if you love me, to his house, see what ails him, and *exercise* with all your charms till you have got the better of his evil spirit.

Your letters will be balm to my bruises, and comfort to my mind; do not be sparing, now that I stand so much in need of them. Without any compliment, the season of compliments between you and me is passed, or ought to be passed long ago; so in honest truth, I tell you, I have not another correspondent so entertaining as your fair self, which, if it will be any gratification to your vanity, you may suppose is the reason why I have lately kept my distance.—

When I see you, I am only the slave of your
B. 6. beauty;

beauty ; but when I read your letters, I am ten times more the captive of your wit.— You cannot be too particular in your accounts of Auberry ; and I should very much like to hear from your all-excelling pen, what the world are talking about, and if my *namesake* has the honour of affording them a good deal of subject matter.—I thank you for the plan of removing all relationship, rather than claiming under the the plea of illegitimacy.—Prepared for both, we were sure of succeeding in one ; the last is best on every consideration, and I give you more credit for being the inventor, than perhaps your lace-man or milliner would do if they were in a giving mood, and you had recommended them to some of their best customers. Did these troublesome creatures get any of your last bank ? I fear not ; I will therefore send you another as soon as I am re-seated in my saddle, and can look round me.—*These* sort of communications between *us* must not be done in a *common* way, or I would not permit

mit you to wait a moment for any proof
that it is in my power to lay at your feet, of
that perfect attachment with which I am my
dear elegant Car.'s most devoted

A. MONTAGUE.

LET-

LETTER III.

*Lord Auberry to Sir Ashton Montague, in-
closed in the former.*

April 30, 17—

I Am the prey of fever, of remorse, of despair; my soul is the dungeon of torments; all the furies of damping retrospection officiate as gaolers, and will not let one honest thought break through, to cast a ray of light on the infernal abode. This is my present condition; what it may be hereafter—do you not tremble, Montague?

* What form is that so hateful to my sight,
With eyes so dull, and cheeks of yellow hue!
It shrinks by day, and wanders in the night,
And sips of nothing but the mizzly dew.

Why

* The above lines appeared in the Morning Herald, Feb. 9, 1791—a day, by particular circumstances, for

ever

Why lurks the monster round about my head,
 To steal that sleep which pity would bestow?
 Why does the fiend thus harass me in bed,
 And whisper nothing but some tale of woe?

—'Tis conscience, child of horror and despair,
 The sting of man—the enemy of peace,
 'Tis that which fills the mind with bitter fear,
 And goads the heart, and bids its slumbers cease.

Strange mystery! that man, the coward slave,
 Should sink beneath its weight, and live but in
 the grave.

Do you not tremble, Montague?—Look
 on the wretch you have made; look on the
 ruins of my peace, the fragments of my re-
 putation; hear the cries of my conscience;
 see the pale ghost of my departed honour,
 and you must tremble!

You tell me I have gained a few paltry
 thousands—How gained them?—By rob-

ever impressed on the author's memory.—The writer
 of them will not call it a misapplication, that they are
 brought in to illustrate the feelings of Lord Auberry,
 though a *novel* character.

berry—

bery—and from whom?—Oh it signifies not from whom ! Widows, orphans, all are fair game to the sons of plunder.—Give them to my sister—why ask me the question?—they are her's, your's, any body's.—Though, now I think of it, had you not better consult Miss Montague, and know how she chooses they shall be disposed of? I have a great inclination to write to her on the subject.—I never will betray you, Sir Ashton; yet I surely have a right, if I please, to confess *myself* a villain.—Oh ! but am I not a *free* man, and may I not be the husband of Mary? I think you tell me so; and shall I offer a villain to her acceptance, or would she accept the hand of a villain? Oh! no, no, no, never, never ! I see my error too late to save her, too late to save myself, too late for every thing but destruction, and that is fully established—her's, mine; your's, every body's.

Talk to me no more of Mary and happiness, I have turned my back on them for ever; I had rather face the mouth of a
—vied cannon,

cannon, than speak to Miss Montague; I had rather look on a basilisk, than contemplate those charms that have undone me: I had rather the thunder of heaven crush me to atoms, than hear the tones of that voice which is of heaven's own tuning, crying out, Mary is the martyr of fraud, of persecution, of Auberry!—What a frightful picture does my imagination at this moment conjure up; there are a thousand devils in every trait of it. I will throw it on paper, let it make its way to *thy* heart as it has done to *mine*; and I will whisper to thee what must be the consequence,—confession—restitution—repentance—amendment—pardon—and peace!

Mary is the subject of my tortured fancy; I have sketched her on the mind's canvass in the true colouring of birth, riches, beauty, health, vivacity and candour—admired, beloved, adored.—This picture, which would have graced the cabinet of a prince, was destined to the fortunate Auberry. He lost all his soul's wealth, by which alone he could

could have made this prize his own—at one stroke he lost it;—and to make the jewel of little estimation to others, when he could no longer hope to obtain it for himself, he basely holds up a counterfeit, without birth, without riches—a parish girl, and a beggar!—Oh God! I can go no further; finish the piece at your leisure;—if there be guardian spirits that protect the innocent, Mary is safe; if there be avenging ones to punish the guilty, what will become of Montague and of Auberry.

LETTER IV.

The Duchess of Cleveland to Lady Auberry.

May 6, 17—

I Had once the pleasure of writing to your ladyship on the proposed alliance of our young people, but our correspondence closed at that period; for when the affair broke off on our side of the question, I was so heartily ashamed of Lexington's folly, that I could not think of beginning it again on a subject which I do not now, nor ever shall, reflect upon with patience: the more I know of your grand-daughter, the more my ill-humour increases, that he does not deserve to be so happy as he might have been.

In the present state of affairs, it would be weakness to refrain from speaking my sentiments, being convinced from the tenor

of.

of all your letters, that you are not a person to be offended at a well intended officiousness.

What an abominable story is this that has been fabricating to the disadvantage of Miss Montague!—will any body in their senses believe it? and yet the plotters have got the estates, I find, and her money. This is a very serious part of the business; but let us once see the Duke enough recovered to have it explained to him, then it is not unlikely he will be able to set every thing right again, and force them to make restitution.

The intimacy that for so many years subsisted between the Duke and Colonel Montague, does not make the idea at all improbable; on the contrary, it is extremely natural to suppose that he should be able to give some certain information tantamount to the proofs stolen from your ladyship's cabinet.

As to the story of her mean parentage, that is the most ridiculous of all ridiculous fables.

fables. Who will give it credit? none but a few of her own sex, that find an *innocent* amusement in degrading a friend or a sister who stands in the way of their preferment. Neither beauty nor merit can ever shew itself in the world, without creating a great many foes; those who have superior good qualities, must lay them out of the world's way, or they will have them trampled upon; nay, I am persuaded, if one were to make one's self appear a fool, or insignificant, or a dowdy, to engage the good will of our neighbours, they would not shew the approbation of our humility, for fear we might grow conceited of being good for nothing.

Notwithstanding all these lets and hindrances we women love to throw in the way of each other, pray, madam, do not dream that there can be any thing very terrible in the fate of your grand-daughter. We *know* her birth; the Duke, I am sure, will take care of her *fortune*; and when that foolish boy Lexington comes to his senses, all must be well.—She is a little simpleton

on the matter at present, but as it seems at a distance, and his reformation by no means a certain thing, I let her alone till I have something more to build upon than expectations or wishes.

She has behaved like an angel in this affair; she is sorry for the wickedness of her relations, but does not repine at the consequences, so far as her own interest is concerned in them. Indeed, Lady Auberry, she is a charming young creature, and those who do not acknowledge it, and warmly support her through this scandalous calumny, are no friends to innocence, and shall never again find my doors open to receive them, except where *certain* connections *force* me to let them in against my inclinations. — There are some of the former and some of the latter description, who have given themselves airs, and to whom I have made no secret of my determination: by this means I have already got rid of many disagreeable hangers-on, once possessed of my better opinion; but I don't know how it

4 is,

is, this wonderful child of yours has strangely perverted my taste; I look for her mildness, simplicity, tenderness, and purity in others; not always finding, I am often displeased.

I meant only to have made my compliments in a few lines; but have impertinently engrossed so much of your ladyship's time, that, not to add to my fault, I have the honour to subscribe myself

B. CLEVELAND.

LET.

LETTER V.

Mrs. Oxburn to Sir Ashton Montague.

May 7, 17—

DEAR, dolorous Sir Knight of the *Common*, I grieve at the treachery of your naughty steed, and most heartily wish a certain gentleman, whose name I have the honour to bear, had been on the back of it rather than yourself. He never rides, poor man, with a groom; so nobody could have picked him up—Lord, how lucky it would have been!—Often does he frisk about when he can get a horse without paying for it, and I shall certainly borrow yours to set him upon it the first opportunity, making him take exactly the same road you did; and if the dear creature drags him to the purpose, instead of disgracing him, I shall do as one of the Roman Emperors did,
build

build him a temple, and cause all my slaves pay him divine honours.

You do well to flatter my literary talents, but you will do much better when you send me the bank.—I know I am fairer than a moor, and taller than a pigmy.—I can do without praises, but money I cannot do without.

I have executed your commission, and was going to obey your commands, though I admire your modesty in supposing I have nothing else to do but to go your errands and answer your questions.

I called upon Auberry before I had read your letter twice over; as to his that you sent me, it is the mere rigmarole of a madman.—I believe he thinks the whole world a lottery, with only one prize in it; that prize is out of the wheel, and now all the rest of us are blanks. The powers of that worse than *Circe* are incredible! how did you escape them? I have asked the question a hundred times; but let it stand—it does your judgment a great deal of honour.—I am going

to talk to you about your friend—mine he shall never be as long as I live.

Two doctors' carriages waited at the house; and not choosin^g that my tyrant should by any means hear of my charitable visit, I drew the string, got out of my chariot, walked into a shop opposite, bought some music, and waited there till the coast was clear: pray observe my caution, for I sent away my carriage, and ordered it to wait for me in Bond Street.

Having made more purchases than I wanted, and seen the doctors move off in solemn parade, I asked the shop-woman if the Fledgells were returned from Bath; and she not being able to tell me any thing about them, I said I would step across the street to enquire of the housekeeper, as I expected some little matters would be sent to me from thence when they came to town.—She offered to knock at the door for me; but I refused, and announced my own approach by two gentle taps.

I should hardly have known what to have said,

said, had any body but his own man let me in.—Prichard recollected me as your friend, and the civil acquaintance of his Lord; so you may be sure I soon came to the bottom of all he could tell me: indeed he told me nothing that was worth hearing:—he said his Lordship was very bad, light-headed, and often extremely furious; that the disorder had been coming on for many weeks, and the doctors thought it would go hard with him.

Were the Ladies of his family informed of his Lordship's critical situation? I meekly asked.

His Lordship's strict commands were, that nobody should write to acquaint them of his indisposition, because his mother was ill, and he would not have his sister leave her on any account.

—I hate to be so particular about a pack of nonsense; but you have such a knack of gilding your nauseous pills, that I cannot help swallowing them, though they were to choke me; and it is almost as bad as suf-

location to talk about people one does not care two straws for.

I thought, after all my trouble, I should never have got at the sight of Auberry.—Prichard made a thousand excuses why I could not be admitted to his chamber; but there is a master key that locks up all obstructions, and unlocks all difficulties; I thought of your obliging implication, drew out my purse, and gained admittance.

When we came to the door, he opened it gently, beckoning a female who was kneeling at the side of the sick man's bed. It is my Lord's nurse, said Prichard; and whilst your Ladyship stays, she has no business here.

She was flying by me, and never should I have thought of stopping her, if her face and figure had not excited my curiosity.—I caught hold of her gown,—there is no occasion for so much ceremony, child, said I, you must not go out; I shall speak to you by and by.

The creature coloured like fire, gave me
the

the most impertinent look you can imagine, and would have persisted in leaving the room if I had not turned the key and put it in my pocket.—I then looked round to see if there were any more doors by which she might escape, and finding none, I drew back the curtain, expecting to see Auberry either tied down with ropes, or in a strait waistcoat; but no such thing, he was lying on his broad back, his cheeks the colour of red sealing-wax, and snoring away with all the soft melody of a dozen Scotch bagpipes.

I could not for my life forbear laughing, which frightened poor Prichard, who begged I would not waken his Lord, for the doctor had given him a sleeping potion, which he was happy to see was beginning to take effect.—One would think these sort of sleeping draughts are particularly efficacious to the house of Auberry, that they work alike upon fourscore and twenty-six. Unwilling to interrupt its progress in the latter instance, I reclosed the curtain, and sat down on a chair at the further end of

the sick chamber, in spite of the efforts my officious attendant humbly made to conduct me out of it.

I invited my prisoner, by a motion of the hand, to come near me; but I do not think that the *ci-devant* Mary Montague ever looked at me with greater contempt, even when her mighty delicacy has been offended by my good humoured repartee, than did this nurse-tending animal.

Perhaps you think there can be nothing in this detail to entertain or interest you: but pray consider that a glow-worm will shine, though by the side of a hedge; and beauty, however coarsely attired, will make itself seen; surely, if I am at the trouble of pointing it out, you cannot do less than be amused.—Upon my life, Montague, it is terribly mortifying that I am forced to declare I have never in my own mirror, or in any circle, seen so much grace, dignity, and loveliness, as is monopolized by this little hand-maiden of Auberry's:—he must be mad indeed to think about the fallen Mary,
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+ 20
having

having such a face to contemplate as his beautiful *femme de chambre*. You never saw any thing half so handsome : if she were in high life, we should be all forced to hide our heads ; never more would I go to a ball, or an assembly, where there was but a chance of meeting her. Rather than be thus eclipsed, I would learn to play at eighteen-penny quadrille, keep company with none but old cats, and pass the rest of my days like a mighty good sort of a woman.

Finding I could not prevail on the pretty minx to come near me, I condescended to follow her.—What are you afraid of, child? said I ; you shall not shun me in this manner.—The deuce a word could I get from her.

I asked Prichard if the girl was dumb.

She is no great talker, my Lady.

So it seems ; but I suppose it is a part of her duty to *talk* to Lord Auberry, and to *divert* him occasionally.—Pray who is she?

My sister, Madam, and a very modest young woman.

Well, but if she is ever so modest, she would not be hurt by shewing me her face! it is really pretty, and I want to examine it; be so good to bid her remove her handkerchief with which she continues to hide it.

I almost wished I had not made the proposal, though it was instantly complied with: she needed no importunity, nor did her brother seem inclined to use it;—the lightening of her eyes came forked upon us in every direction, flash succeeded flash so impetuously that I should have been terrified, but that I fortified my courage by considering that she was beneath my notice, and these airs put on to give herself consequence.

Brother, said she, I shall insist on your forcing the door, if *this Lady* refuses to give up the key;—it is my *duty* to wait near the person of Lord Auberry, but I will not stay to be insulted by any woman who comes *unasked* to visit my Lord in his *own* apartment.

Oh, it is so, creature! retorted I, then you
are

are here upon invitation ! but don't be jealous, child, my visit is merely a *charitable* one.

Open the door ; I command you to open it ; and she actually stamped her foot with as much passion as if she had a right to be angry at having her virtue suspected. I delivered the key, bidding her go about her business ; and added, you are really so pretty that I expect, when I see you again, it will be in a *chariot* or *vis-a-vis*—pity so much *dignity* should be obliged to walk on foot.

She did not stay to answer me, and I flung myself into a chair, really wearied with her impertinence.

You may expect all this bustle could not pass near the sleeping *Adonis* without disturbing his repose ; but you are to understand, though our motions and looks were vehement enough to have roused the dead, our voices were so moderate that his Lordship's repose suffered no interruption.

I resolved to stay half an hour, and entered into conversation with Prichard about

his sister. He seemed very sorry she had offended me, and gave me such strong assurances of her not being Lord Auberry's mistress, that I could hardly disbelieve, though I was determined not to believe him. I asked how she came so saucy; he said, she was a beauty, and had been spoiled in her bringing up, which accounted for her airs very rationally.

This eighth sleeper appeared to have sat in for his six months dose; my half hour was out—I would not have stayed to please you, or his Majesty, or his Majesty's *eldest* son, though *times were*—But I hate stale recollection.—I was taking myself off, when I heard the man in the straw tumbling about like a whale in the ocean, and then in a quick snuffling voice, he cried out, It will be found out! some miracle will discover it! What is the matter with you, my Lord? said I, drawing nearer to him, and laying my hand on his——, it seemed as if I had touched fire; I pulled it back, and repeated my question. Opening his
ghastly,

ghastly eyes, he fixed them on me with as little spirit of animation as he would have looked at his grandmother, pronounced the name of Mary three times as if he had been acting Chrononhotonthologos, groaned three times, and returned to his lullaby, without ceremony, *etiquette*, or good breeding.—And this is the evil spirit you expect that I am to *exorcise*—it throws him into the fire and into the water, perhaps it may drag me after him; so do not think I will ever go near him again—not I indeed.

We had three balls this week, every one more charming than another—your name—*your name*—was not invited to one of them.—How delightful!—the flame was twinkling at first, but there are so many of us ready to bring in our hands full of *sewel*, that a great fire is produced which must burn that little impertinent prude out of the capital.

I am bursting with intelligence, but not another word till to-morrow—I go to night to the Duchefs of Northington's—all the world are to be there.

Continuation.

My ideas are as thick as a wood, and I stand in the middle of them, without knowing whether it is best to go backwards or forwards: they are a nosegay of wild flowers, which having gathered, I shall not take the trouble to sort; I present them in the gross, and leave you to arrange them.

Miss Lexington is going to be married; it is a declared thing!—and Maria treads close on the heels of her sister—better and better!—It seems odd enough that I should feel any transports about the matter, yet in truth I am rejoiced, it is beyond all arithmetic to tell you how much.—They are charming girls, and after my own heart; but what care I for that? it would be no matter of grief to me if every charming girl in the world were to hang on the hedge till doomsday, or till their faces resembled a drumhead; sink or swim it would be all one to Car. except on the present occasion, from which the most delightful consequences are likely to happen.

Miss

Miss Lexington has made a conquest of Lord Selby, and Miss Maria has danced herself into the very heart's core of the right honourable, smirking, simpering, skipping Earl of Silvester.—I should blush at your stupidity were you to ask of what good these alliances will be in our affairs;—oh they will be of all the good in the world, by keeping mortification on the detestable enemy of my peace—yes, they will cover the head of Mary Montague with more disgrace than all the rest of our contrivances to disgrace her.—I shall explain this matter to you presently; in the mean time you are to observe, that though between ourselves I do not take the pains to change old names, yet whenever I speak of her to any other Lady, it is no longer Miss Montague, it is Mary Wilson. You have no notion how diligent I am in giving about, particularly amongst the young men who have ever seemed to distinguish her by their notice, attested copies of old nurse's dying declaration—her removal from this world

of sin and wickedness was so apropos—that—but no matter—it is certain she did not go a minute too soon—Her paper—what good would her paper have done if she had lived to contradict it? but *now*, drawn up in all its proper *forms*, witnessed by two military *gentlemen* of honour, *gentlemen* of credit—oh, it is of infinite use, it is worth a Jew's eye at least! Merely to have bastardised the poor thing, would have done her no great harm, her parents would still have been people of fashion, and we love pleasure so well that it is quite the ton to support it in all its consequences; a thousand people would have taken her up and cried, it was not the girl's fault—but to bring her in guilty of mean birth and poverty does the thing effectually, it is signing the death-warrant of all her pretensions,—what few dissenting voices there are, must squall to please themselves, nobody will care a farthing for what can be said in her favour.

Lord, I have had such a set-down in Grosvenor Square! I go there no more;—

the

the Duchess is one of the *bewitched*, she has forbidden me to come there again;—with all my heart—I do not care two pins for her Grace. I shall tell you more about it by and by, now I must go back to the Lexingtons, and their spouses elect.

It is a truth pretty well known to me, and to you, Montague, that these young lordlings *did* make proposals somewhere else, and were rejected, after which they ceased to visit the Clevelands; they placed their ill success, at first, to a prior attachment for Auberry—afterward put it to the right account, her wish to engage the Duke's nephew; but since they have both *deserted*, and we have let our cat out of the bag, these sweet creatures are ashamed, it seems, of their former advances. I have thought it worth my while to laugh at their excellent taste; so whether it is owing to my epigrammatic raillery, or the mortified pride of the sisters, who were forced to take up with her scraps,—the right honourables are now on the stool of repentance; they commission

mission their Desdemonas of the present hour, and call also on the aid of your friend Car. to contradict the thing altogether. Not contented with our best performances, they go about themselves, declaring off tooth and nail, from the imputation of ever having encouraged the fallen lady to suppose they entertained a serious thought about her; even the letters that were written by them, to the old dowager grandmother, are all denied.—What can be more gratifying!—a new conquest is nothing to it.

All the world were, as I told you they would be, at the Duchess of Northington's last night, and only three deserters from *our* cause: these were, Lady Elizabeth Jones, who always turns against the tide, run which way it will; Lady Elderton, a negative in the list of fashion; and Lady Felton, who has no other merit than being the mother of two handsome young fellows. Mary was the subject: Lady Elizabeth roared like a bedlamite; called the reports base, scandalous, founded in treachery, and substantiated

stantiated in forgery : one of our *proofs* was put into her hands by Miss Dawn, but she tore it in a thousand pieces, and stamped it under her feet. The Duchess of Northington, who is a mighty pleasant creature, pretended to be her convert, and the storm abated ; I say pretended, for we have not two more *staunch* partisans than her Grace and Lady Araminta. Mary's other two advocates were soon put to silence by the Marchioness of Stairs, saying, she was so well convinced of the detestable imposture as never to visit, or permit her daughters to visit, any body where it was possible the mean creature might insinuate herself a second time ; once was *enough* to have these sort of good-morrows practised upon people of *distinction*. This address was so plainly directed, that the two Ladies of subordinate quality, not choosing to relinquish her acquaintance, recovered the fault, and behaved very decently for the remainder of the evening.

I have told you who were *against*—as to

who

who were *for* us, it is impossible to tell, except I send for her Grace's visiting-book, and make my list of names so long that you would not have patience to go half through them.—The *best* speakers amongst *us* I will not pass over, because they ought to be distinguished:—there were the Duchesses of Northington, her daughter Lady Araminta Boyce, the Marchioness of Stairs, her two appendages Lady Bell and Lady Bridget Loughton; Lady Dawn, and the two Misses, who have not so much beauty, but more fluency than their mother. Lady Francis Lexington would speak too occasionally, she is quite with us, and does some good when any body will listen to her; she declared Miss Montague was never her favourite; she never approved of taking her into the family; Mr. Andrew Solemn, she said, told her Francy long ago *what* would come out, and averred, that the young creature was no more the daughter of Lady Mary Pledell and Colonel Montague, than she was his by the Queen of Sheba; the
poor

poor woman does not always know what she is talking about, but this story being supported by her two nieces, it is received as authentic. The Duchess of Cleveland is freezing cold to the Lexingtons, for the same reason that she *cut* with me entirely, and I must tell you in this very place how it happened.

Two or three days ago I called in Grosvenor Square; I found them there looking red-hot angry, and her Grace in the pouts; you know how bitter she can be, and that morning she was as bitter as gall:—just as I came in at the door, I heard her say to them, I believe in the present race of young women, envy keeps no holiday, but is always in the wheel, and working upon their own destruction.

Popping in my unlucky phiz at that moment, I hoped the honey of my disposition would sweeten the acid of hers. “Bless me,” said I, “that is the prettiest sentiment, though I caught but the last words! will your Grace be so good to repeat it?”

I wish

I wish your Grace a good morning, said Miss Lexington; Maria got up and said the same thing; the Duchefs returned their formal courtesey with one more formal by half.—They went out of the room, whilst I threw myself by her on the same sofa where she was sitting.

They are gone away in a huff, said she; and if they had not been the *Duke's* relations, I should have told them I did not desire their return.—They are going to be married I find—the Lord have mercy on their husbands!—if they manage so much in other people's families, what will they do in their own?

I thought she might have been quarrelling with them, something or other about these matches; so, to turn the conversation, began talking of her favourite, but was unlucky in my very first attempt to put her into good humour, because, forsooth, I only said, my cousin, Lady Augusta Foy, wanted a governess for her children, and if Miss

Wilson

Wilson chose to accept it, I would recommend her.

Had I spit in her face she could not have resented it more—out it all came—that the Lexingtons had committed a similar offence to my own—her pale lean face was actually plumped out with passion—bouncing with the fury of an enraged lioness, she called me impertinent, insolent, put me in mind of *all* Miss Montague's perfections and my *own* imperfections, both plentifully exaggerated; by much too humiliating was the comparison for my representation; so you must put that and that together, making it out as well as you can, in what sort of flattering language I was informed that none but the friends of *Lady Auberry's* grand-daughter would ever be considered as *friends* to the Duchess of Cleveland.

There was a great deal more of it, but I have no patience to make a regular biography. — The Lexingtons circulate *their* affront—*I* pocket *mine*.

Not a word have I to stick on the nib
of

of my pen, bad enough for the incredulity of *your* sex: it vexes me to death that, except our *own* courting party, none of the male creatures will be on *our* side, or believe a word that we will tell them;—you may as well hold your tongue as say she is a coquette, or that she paints white and red, though Lady Francis stands to it, so do the Lexingtons; and who, as they observe, can know better than themselves, having lived with her in a family way so long?—Still these men are as stubborn as mules—nothing to her disadvantage will go down:—had half so much scandal been blowing in the wind against poor Car. every one of them would have taken his little horse and galloped away to meet it.

They are all alike, married men as well as bachelors.—Last night I overheard a mighty pretty scrap of *household* discourse, between Lord Dawn, my Lady, and one of their daughters;—her ladyship desired his Lordship to invite some of the Royal-
lies, who happened to be at her Grace of
1
Northing-

Northington's, to her ball, Tuesday fortnight;—the howdy-dowdy peer did as she directed him, returned to let her know the invitation was accepted, and asked when she meant to send out her cards?—To-morrow! was her answer. I am sorry not to see Miss Montague here to-night, said the wise man of Gotham; I hope she is not prevented by the Duke's being worse.

Oh Lord, no papa! that is very far from the reason, you forget the disgrace she is fallen into.

I do not forget, child, how greatly that amiable girl has been injured, and heartily wish all those who have wronged her were to swing together in a halter! (There's a wish for you, Montague—what pretty figures you and I should make dancing an allemand between heaven and earth!) *You intend* (added he, to his wife) *to send her a card, I hope?*

Indeed I do not intend it, my Lord.

Then I vow to God, Madam, you have no ball, except Miss Montague is invited.

Miss

Miss Dawn very properly desired the ball, on *such* terms, might be given up; they all sparred a good deal longer—my Lady would not revoke—my Lord would not submit—the Royalties were to be *disinvited* this morning; and my hair-dresser, who also dresses her Ladyship, has informed me, she is just gone out of town very much indisposed, which I guess is to be the flying excuse for putting off the ball.

I want you to get well of your bruises and come among us, as your credit about the fairness of things is rather in a tumbled down state; *female* tilters will not support it long, and it requires better props than those on which we depend; we have the weight of the world on our shoulders, and nothing but the strength of an Atlas can bear it up—it is only in the home department that I care for your assistance, the rest I can manage without you; there is scarce a city or a town of note in the three kingdoms where I have not got my correspondents to tell the people how wickedly the

amiable Sir Ashton Montague has been cheated out of his estates, and how marvelously they are restored to him, as well as a spy to tell me the different opinions that are entertained about this wonderful recovery.

When I am writing to you, I never stop scribbling as long as my pen and my wits will run together; the first is worn out in your service, the second are struck against the flats, and I have nothing more to say than that I pray with more devotion than I have ever prayed before, that you may be soon replaced on your saddle, able to look about you, and willing to send the dear bit of paper, so essential to the credit, pleasure, and splendour of

Your's in a civil way,

CAR. OXBURN.

LETTER VI.

*Miss Montague to Lady Auberry.**May 8, 17—*

THE Duchefs, my deareft grandmamma, is delighted with your charming letter *; ſhe calls you the firſt woman in the world; my heart fondly re-echoed the words, and repeats with rapture, Lady Auberry is the firſt woman in the world; her Grace bids me ſay, ſhe ſhall frequently bring you in debt to her pen, that ſhe may be repaid with many more of ſuch eloquent compositions.

If I was not to tell you what ſhe ſays about my return to Riversdale, ſtill you would know her answer is propitious, by the very force of that ſympathy, ſo beautifully

* This letter does not appear.

described as uniting us spiritually, though we are personally divided. She assures me, that as soon as the Duke is well enough to go to Bath, where the physicians are sending him for the full re-establishment of his health; she will prevail on him to part with me for the time that it is thought necessary he should continue there.—What a holiday for your Mary! never, never, would I be divided by my own consent another hour from my beloved, oh, how tenderly beloved, parent!—Will you not endeavour to set aside her Grace's intentions of having me with her next winter?—surely you will.—I love her and the Duke with all my heart, but I cannot, indeed I cannot, ever leave you again.—In vain the cruel world say I am not your granddaughter.—Nature contradicts them every moment, and happily for me her voice is the strongest.

Lady Jane has promised to be my companion to Riversdale—how joyful the meeting even in contemplation!—My imagination revels at the idea of it.

My dear Duke does not yet know the little creature he honours with his favour has lost her consequence, neither is he to hear of it till he leaves London; I wish he may be no more grieved than I am, and it will not disturb a moment of his repose;—far different feelings should I have encountered, had my union taken place with Mr. Lexington before these claims were made on my property; I can bear to be poor, but I am too proud to have supported the idea of fastening my poverty and disputed birth on a family, who are already intitled to so much of my gratitude; I thank God for having escaped that mortification; for, if I am called an impostor *now*, what should I have been *then*?—It is very true indeed, that they say I am a designer, a plotter, an impostor:—you, who so well know that I do not deserve those epithets, will only smile as I do, that the world loses so much of its time to so little purpose.

The Duchess tells me every thing that is said of me, so does Lady Jane; they
did

did not repose the same confidence in me at first, it was from the tenderest consideration for my peace this caution was observed; it is now removed; they see my spirit survives my fortune, and neither of them any longer hesitate to treat me as a rational being.—What have I to complain of? I have lost nothing.—All that I ever called my wealth is preserved;—your love, your approbation, the friendship of Lady Jane, of Miss Beauclerk, and what I least of all expected, the favour—I will almost call it maternal protection of the Duchess.—How much has she risen in my estimation! What has humbled me in the opinion of others, seems to have exalted me in her's; she has actually quarrelled with many of her old acquaintances, because she imagined I was slighted, perhaps insulted by them.....My dear Lady Jane, who in every sense of the word, is my second parent, has also had some of the same business on her hands. Mrs. Toovey was out of town when this affair broke out—she did not

return till yesterday, when calling before eleven, which was too early for the Duchess, she immediately posted away to Lady Jane, and was let in.—Her ladyship gave us so laughable an account of this visit, that I am tempted to repeat it, the consequences of it, to herself, have been rather fatal, as the doors of both houses are ordered to be shut against her in future.

I had just concluded a letter to my niece, said this dear woman, when Mrs. Toovey was announced; she flew to me with outspread hands, looks so unsettled, so eager to speak, so violent in her motions, that I wondered what ailed her, and would have asked the question, but she gave me no time even to enquire how she did; throwing her skinny person on a chair next to me:—
“Lady Jane,” said she, “did you ever hear of such wicked, such vile creatures? Well, to be sure, it will kill my Lady Duchess—no wonder she could not see me this morning—and then Mr. Lexington!



ington!—such an escape!—that is charming!”

Who are you talking of, Mrs. Toovey?

“That abominable impostor, Miss Montague.—Well, to be sure, Lady Auberry and she are neither worse than the other. Well, and how did it all come to light?—and so the girl I hope is to be sent back—charming!—and my Lady Duchefs and my Lord Duke——Oh, my dear grandmamma, if I ever saw Mr. Lexington, I have seen him enter the house this moment.

LETTER VII.

Lady Jane Petworth to Lady Auber.

In continuation.

May 9, 17—

IT is pity so sweet a transcript of your Mary's heart should be tossed aside, or dispatched to your ladyship in its present unfinished state, I will therefore adopt myself her amanuensis, and try to do her works the credit they deserve: it is a hard task to do that; but what may not a willing painter, transported with her subject, be able to perform?

I have much to tell you, but nothing terrible to relate; perhaps amongst the materials with which I am furnished, you may light on some that will force you to smile, others weep, but not a tear shall moisten

your

your eyes from the beginning to the end of my letter, that cannot make out its hereditary claim to happiness. Have I said enough to make you understand, that your granddaughter is quite as well, and as happy, as when she sat down to entertain you, though not half so much to the purpose as I shall do.

Ah! dear grandmamma, if I ever saw Mr. Lexington, I have seen him enter the house this moment.—Why could she not have told you, that she had seen Lady Jane Petworth at the same time?—for I happened to be holding by his arm, and we entered the house together.—I sent him to the Duchess's bedside to make his peace, if he could, with her, as he had before done with me, and I returned into the breakfast parlour, where I had caught a glimpse of Miss Montague, as she sat at her writing table before a window;—the pen had fallen from her hand; and I found her altogether in a state of amazement. “Good God,” she cried, “how glad I am that you

are come!—did Mr. Lexington pass you at the door?”—Lexington did not pass me, my dear, for we came in at the same instant. “Then it is he indeed, but what brings him back?—Where did you first see him?”—The sweet fluttered creature almost panted for breath as she asked these questions.

I saw him at my own house, Mary, and at eight o'clock this morning.—“Eight o'clock!”—repeated she, a cherub winged blush that flew across her fair cheeks, proclaimed her surprise at his making me so early a visit.

Not to increase her palpitations, I took no notice of them, but began telling her how extremely I had been astonished by his unexpected appearance—he came before I had half my clothes on; my footman, who let him up, has been with me but two days, and did not know him, nor would he give in his name. I was only informed, a gentleman, who seemed very impatient to see me, waited below.—I hurried down as fast

as I could, but started when I saw Lexington stand on the first stair to meet me.—Entirely occupied by his recent unworthy conduct, I threw a great deal of reserve into his reception.—“Oh! good God,” cried he, “is this Lady Jane Petworth, who receives me with less cordiality than she would receive a stranger?”

I feel no change in my sentiments for you, Sir, since we last parted in Grosvenor Square.

Well, say no more of that, say no more of that, in a quick hurrying tone—what is passed cannot be recalled—but tell me I conjure you, have I the murder of my uncle to atone for, or does he still live?

I had, till now, averted my eyes from him; I looked towards him, as he mentioned his uncle,—there was in his voice a something irresistably attractive, and I perfectly screamed with horror when I saw the change in his countenance.—“And is he much changed indeed?” asked your sweet Mary, with a suppressed sigh.—Very much,

my dear,—he is pale, thin, dejected; he looks ten years older than when he went on his quick-failing expedition to the continent.—“I am sorry for it,” she replied, “the Duke and Duchess will grieve sadly at the alteration.” Oh, but we shall set him up again now we have him amongst us,—Are you a good nurse, Mary? “Why does your ladyship enquire, I hope you do not expect that I shall offer myself as a nurse to Mr. Lexington?”—Somebody belonging to our little friendly circle must take the office upon them, or he will never get the better of his consumptive habit;—he looks like a ghost—his hair is rioting round his pale face as if he did not care what became of him, and he has not been in a bed for the last five nights.—She smiled—“You are very whimsical in your description; I am sure he had nothing *consumptive* in his figure when I saw him from the window.”—So, so, Miss Montague, these are infidel notions—I shall not shut up my bowels of compassion, if you are so hard-hearted;

hearted; I must believe him in a decline, and I must believe that he will die, if some very great turn does not happen in his favour.—“Dear Lady Jane, I know you are jesting, but why will you—I mean, why did he do so heedless a thing?” I understand your meaning, my dear, extremely well, and shall tell you—why he imprudently travelled so many nights without refreshment. She found herself a little embarrassed, and was glad to let me go on in my own way.

He did not hear of the Duke's seizure from Lord Francis, when his lordship came up with him at Paris, where he waited his arrival; they proceeded a considerable length on their way to Naples, when some letters he got from this side of the water spoke of the Duke's situation as a matter of which he must have been long ago fully informed. He applied to Lord Francis for further intelligence, who owned his Grace had been in danger, but that when he left Britain, he was in the fairest way of recovery,

recovery, for which reason he forebore the subject, fearing it might make a disagreeable impression on his spirits, and cast a gloom over the pleasures of their future excursion.—The young man, who believed his own refractory conduct the ostensible cause of the Duke's illness was not to be appeased by the solemn asseverations of Lord Francis, that all danger was finally at an end; neither did he express himself very much obliged to his lordship for having kept him so long in the dark. Having resolved to come home and fall at the feet of one uncle, very much to the dissatisfaction of the other, they parted not the best friends in the world—Lord Francis refused to turn back with him, but continued his solitary tour towards Naples, whilst poor Lexington, on the wings of duty, or some other wings equally well constructed for swiftness, flew across the Continent, and two hours ago alighted at my door.—Having talked a long time together, and very much to the purpose—he being impatient to

to come hither—I not expecting my carriage so soon as he wished; and the morning being a brilliant one, I consented to promenade it with only his arm to assist me.—Here I stopped, considering what I should next say to entertain my attentive, but silent companion—however, she prevented my studies, by saying in a low voice, “My dearest Lady Jane, I have a favour to request, and you must not refuse me.”—I shook my head—It will not do Mary.—“What, before I have told you.”—Your resentful eyes have declared that you want to hide yourself from Lexington.—“Ah, do not call it hiding, because I determine not to throw himself in his way; if I stay here can I avoid meeting him?—Let me, I beseech you, in the name of Lady Auberry I beseech you, let me go this moment to Bruton Street and wait your return; or when he is gone, send for me, and I will come back immediately.”

Make yourself quite easy, child, I will draw you into no dilemma—I will place you
in

in no disagreeable situation."—She had risen from her chair, and I had taken hold of her hand to prevent a premeditated elopement, when the Duchefs's woman came in with her Grace's compliments, and a request that we would both step into her apartment.—"I cannot go, indeed I cannot go," said the struggling dear, buffet- ing in the toils of her own affrighted fan- cy.—I asked Mrs. Brudsell if any com- pany was with the Duchefs. Nobody was with her *now*, she said.—Where is Mr. Lexington? was my second question. He had just left her Grace—she believed was gone home, as she heard his aunt say to him as she came into the room, and he was going out—Let me hear of no excuses, but go to bed immediately.

Thank God, cried Mary, and slipping her arm through mine, we passed into the dressing room, and from thence to the bed- chamber. The Duchefs looked well pleased, and was in good spirits;—she asked Miss Montague if she had seen the Duke—how he
had

had rested—if we thought he would be able to move soon—that she longed to give Lady Auberry the pleasure of seeing her granddaughter. In short, I never heard her talk so much on so many subjects at one time; but in all her conversation she did not once mention the name of Lexington, and your lovely Mary very speedily recovered her usual composure, if not her usual vivacity.—The surprise of the morning had left a degree of languor on her countenance.—The Duchess observed it—said she would kill herself with so much confinement, and begged I would take her out for two or three hours—I have ordered the chariot to be ready in twenty minutes,—do not trouble your heads about the Duke, I shall go and sit with him in the mean time—she began to get up as soon as we came into the room, and was ready to leave her apartment before our carriage came up to the door.—Take a long drive, said she, I shall not expect to see you again till you have gone a dozen miles at least.

—When

—When you return, come to me, I shall be with the Duke, and I expect you are to tell me I have done my duty in your absence.

The rout we were to take was left to my direction, and I gave the preference to Richmond, thinking a walk as well as a drive would do us good, the Duke having delightful gardens belonging to his villa, but I afterwards repented of my choice, when I saw, notwithstanding all her pretty arts to conceal it, that reflecting on passed scenes embittered the present moment.—I might have thought of this before, and how natural it was that her spirits should be affected, this being the first time of her making an excursion to Richmond, without having Henry of the party.—When we came to the green-house, an old gardener, who has lived in the family thirty years, and had employed himself since we first made our appearance in pulling flowers for us to carry to town, said, when he presented them to your granddaughter, “these

are

are not so fine as *some* that your ladyship have seen of my raising; heretofore I would challenge all the gardeners in England for a grander shew than those my Lady Duchesses and your ladyship came and fetched away from here before the masquerade—the young squire was with you too, as I well remember, for he not only helped to do my work, but gave me half a guinea: I hope his honour is well?”

Oh, very well, said I, and I dare say it is not the last half guinea you will have of his money, honest Richard.—“God bless the whole family,” cried Richard, “there is not such a root and branch to be met with again upon the face of the earth.”

Perhaps you may wonder why I was so impertinent to answer for Miss Montague, when both the speech and the question were directed to her.—The truth is, she could not answer for herself, and if nobody had taken notice of his *gallantry*, poor Richard would have been sorely disappointed.—Her thoughtfulness vanished as soon as we
were

were seated in the carriage, though it was with difficulty we got into it.—What a perfect bower had the old man made of our vehicle, side and front pockets were stuffed with bundles of flowers, whose scented heads reached to the very tops of the glasss, besides having our laps filled after we had scrambled our way through all obstructions, with the choicest of all that was choice, in the estimation of Richard.

Continuation.

MY packet to your ladyship will be so voluminous, that I must break it off and patch it together again, by fits and starts, as occasion offers.—I tell you this, that in future you may not expect my exits or entrances are to be attended with any sort of ceremony.

What company are there with the Duke and Duchess, said Mary, as we passed through the hall.—“Nobody at present, madam,” replied the porter, “I let Mr.
Lexing-

Lexington out about ten minutes ago."—
How good—how considerate!—whispered
she, gently squeezing my hand as we went
forward to the inner apartments, they will
not humble me I perceive, I shall be per-
mitted to go to Riverdale without the *mor-*
tification of an interview. A little anger I
thought was mixed with the observation;
but perhaps I was mistaken. As I opened the
last door, I could distinguish the voice of
her Grace, and heard her say, leave that to
me, it will finish our *petit* romance most
pleasantly. — She said no more, having
turned round and seen that we were at her
elbow. Our reception was more than gra-
cious; it was characterised by every species
of kindness; they both saluted your grand-
daughter;—the Duke told her with a gay
air, that though she was the best nurse in
the world, he would not give her the *whole*
credit of his restoration, but that she must
be contented to divide it with Lexington,
whose return to his reason and his family,
had completed the cure her care had for-
warded.

warded. "Let Mr. Lexington have the whole merit," she replied, "I cannot consent to divide any sort of credit with Mr. Lexington, but the joy I feel at seeing your Grace so much better to day, shall be *all* my own."—She kissed his hand—there was fervency in the action, and her eyes did not want spirit I'll assure you.—The Dukes looked at me and smiled.—I believe she saw I understood her meaning, for she asked me directly if I had ever seen so marvellous a resurrection as Henry's presence had produced on his uncle, but do you know, added she in the same breath, that the weather-cock is in love again. If with the Duke's approbation and your own, I see no harm in that, said I.—Miss Montague got up—she would go and have some powder thrown in her hair, the drive and the walk had taken it all out. Whatever refreshment her hair wanted, her cheeks did not stand in need of any.—The Dukes made her return to her seat, and bid her sit still, for she had never seen her look
more

more to the purpose—the Duke and I want to talk to you about this foolish boy of ours, who, as I was telling Lady Jane, has taken it into his head to be as desperately in love as he has ever been with *you*—“Pray let me go, pray let me go,” replied the agitated charmer, “there can be no necessity for my entering into the affairs of Mr. Lexington.”—This is perfectly *missish*, it will do you no harm to hear what the Duke has to say. I need not tell you who made this speech. “Indeed,” cried his Grace, tenderly taking her hand in his, and obliging her to be seated, “more of my nephew’s happiness depends upon *you* than you seem to imagine; he has used you, my dear child, so exceedingly ill, that without *your* approbation, he cannot hope that his aunt or I will consent to his present election.”—She clasped her lovely hands together,—“Oh! then do not withhold it a moment, for he has my full, my entire approbation.” The Duke caught her in his arms, “Thank you my best love,”

love," said he.—"Thank you, my dear," repeated her Grace, "you are a good child *now*, and I love you better than ever."—"And *has* she forgiven me? has she opened to me *once* more the view to all earthly felicity?" cried Lexington—(he had entered at the door while she was speaking, observed only by myself)—"Say again that I have your full, your entire approbation; dearest admirable Mary!"

Does your ladyship begin to comprehend how this scene is to end?—No—you can have no idea of its conclusion, except you are really inspired. He did not fall at her feet, but stood before her in an attitude that beggars description; there was *soul* in his position—it conveyed every sense of rhetoric—the omissions in his dress were rectified—no traces of fatigue or spiritless suspense dashed with *sombre* hue the brilliant outlines of a contented mind—But what you ask became of your devoted granddaughter in this terrible *rencontre*.—I must have left you in the dark, as to her thoughts, and her wishes,

if the language of her face was not so comprehensive that a mere bungler might find it out. It is the short-hand of her mind, and crowds a great deal into a little space. The strokes of silent expression are masterly, and one easily collects the image and proportion of what they resemble. To see the *soul* flashing in the face as *hers* did, whilst Henry stood expecting his final sentence from her lips, would, one might think, have converted an atheist.—It was not surprise, joy, love, distrust, pity, or resentment, with which she beheld him, but a combination of the whole. “I am grateful,” said she in a voice of dulcet harmony, “to both your Graces for this great condescension and goodness to me: it would be affectation, if I was to appear not to understand the extent of my obligations—I feel myself superior to artifice. I will even confess to Mr. Lexington, that I have construed his politeness in my own favour. If I am wrong, my error does not proceed from *vanity*, I have been led into it by appearances;—if

right, I cannot be too soon in *rejecting* those honours now unbefitting *me* to receive, or *him* to offer. "Mary," he replied, "you know I am no flatterer; I do not intend to confer honours, but to solicit them; I have deceived *you*, but I have *been* deceived."—"By me, Mr. Lexington?"—"No—you are as innocent as angels, and yet I believed you guilty. That d——d Auberry, I *see*, has lost me your affection."—"And I think, Sir (in a more elevated tone than she had spoken in before), it will be very little worth your while to endeavour at retrieving my confidence."—"I wish you would not *pre-sume* to look so *inchanting* in your anger—you only put people out of what they otherwise might say in their own defence. Oh! Mary, I must play with my agony, or it will destroy me—hear my vindication."—"Hear him! hear him! hear him!" was the cry on our side of the house.—She found herself in a sad minority, and the motion was passed.

Henry

*Henry Lexington's Vindication, drawn up for
brevity sake in my own words.*

The first evidence he produced, was a note unsigned, which your grand-daughter immediately recognized to be Lord Auberry's writing—the contents were these:

NOTE:

"A friend of Mr. Lexington's wishes to see him immediately at *White's*; the business on which he wants to consult him is personal, therefore he desires the contents of this note may not transpire."

Your ladyship will recollect the delivery of this billet to him, on the last day he dined in Grosvenor Square. — The wording of it was so obscure, that, not being able to ascertain the intent of this proposed meeting, he only said when he went out, that he should soon come back, and might *then* probably tell Miss Montague the reason of his absence. He met Lord Au-

berry at the top of St. James's Street, who acknowledged himself to have made the appointment. They adjourned to White's; and as soon as they were retired to a private room, he asked, What were the commands of his Lordship?—"Is the day fixed for your marriage with my cousin?" said he. "It is," replied Lexington, "and in three weeks I shall be the happiest of mankind." Auberry smiled—"Is that *quite* certain?"—"Do you suspect my *honour*, my Lord?"—"I hold it sacred, but I always *suspect* the stability of a *Lady's* affection." "For your *own* sake, my Lord, you *must* retract that opinion of Miss Montague."—"Not if I convince you it is well founded?" "Conviction never assails *my* mind in a *dubious* form—my confidence in the loveliest of women is a mountain of *adamant*, and not to be shaken by the hurricane of *words*, or the blustering winds of a *thousand* asseverations."—"Then you require proofs?"—"Yes—and damning ones, my Lord, or it shall go hard with one of us."—"I have no objections—

tions—but if you are satisfied that I do not act the part of a *scoundrel*, you shall not deny me your friendship; and in whatever manner you shall choose to proceed hereafter, *my name* shall never be brought forward.” “I understand your lordship, and accept the terms you offer—Prove it not, and we fight—prove it, and we are friends.”

Lord Auberry pulled out of his pocket a small red letter-case, which he held in his hand for as long a time as he took up in recounting to Henry the beginning and progress of his passion for your grand-daughter, every circumstance of which I could find he related faithfully enough, till he came to assign a cause for the interruption of what he called their mutual felicity, at which part he wandered very strangely: indeed, he had the assurance to advance your ladyship's dislike to his mother, as the reason why you had interposed to detach her from him. He next mentioned the momentary glimpse he got of her when she first came to town—repeated what he then told

her she had to expect from his firmness, avowing in the face of heaven he never would resign his claim upon her affections. He afterwards proceeded to accuse her of inconstancy in so soon receiving the addresses of another; to which he added, that actuated by pique, he had often denied, and once to herself, the existence of a former attachment—it was, he said, in consequence of her own levity and his resentment, both being supported by the certainty of her approaching marriage—His old prejudices in her favour he had supposed totally vanquished, in so much that he did not feel any repugnance in making one of the family party on that day when the intended union was announced in Grosvenor Square. —“ You might then have observed,” said he, “ that *my* attentions were as diffuse as if *Miss Montague* had not been one of the company; yet I saw, or fancied I saw, in *her* eyes, when you did not see them turned towards me, something of past *partiality*. This I did not attempt to inspire, or wish to

to encourage: all that I could do *was*, not to appear to *observe* it, and to behave in a *cooler* way than I *otherwise* should have done, taking myself off as soon as *decency* would permit:—I will own to you, Lexington, I have since *that* day thought of her with *more* tendernefs than perhaps was consistent with her *present* engagements, or my *own* peace. I do not hide my folly, because my honour was still greater, and the moment of *your* marriage with my cousin would have been the *termination* of my residence in this country." Nothing particular, he added, had happened since their last interview; and he was beginning to think he had misconstrued her obliging looks too much in his own favour, till he, that morning, received by the hands of a chairman what had finally put the matter out of dispute. Lord Auberry then took from his little *port folio* several of your grand-daughter's letters, written to him during the first two or three months after he went abroad: these *letters*, though addressed to a *rival*,

drew from Henry such warm praises, as did not seem to displease Mary, though I cannot take up my time in retailing them.

Continuation.

THE note he vouched with his *honour* to have received *that* morning, was compared word by word, and letter by letter, with her other epistles, which taken out of their wrappers lay scattered on the table. The keen sight of a lover, *pre determined* not to be deceived, could find nothing but *conviction* in every line. Lexington, in a state of distraction, without knowing what he was about, put this fatal billet into his pocket. Auberry, immersed in guilt, hurried away the remainder, without observing any deficiency in the number; nor was Henry the richer for his theft till many days after it was committed; when accidentally discovering that he was possessed of so capital a prize, he treasured it up with as much caution as gloomy souls generally do their precious stores of imaginary misfortunes.—

When

When it was produced for our inspection, we all, even Mary herself, acquitted him of *premature* judgment, and of *too* flexible credulity. It is an excellence in the art of forging that never has, or ever can be equalled. You will soon see the original—in the mean time I send you the copy:

“OH! Lord Auberry, to what a dreadful crisis have I been hurried by the strength of my resentment!—Why have you forced me to deceive myself?—to imagine that I returned *your* neglect, *your* contempt, with—what?—With hatred—with disgust.—I have too late discovered *these* are sentiments I can never feel for *Lord Auberry*—And is it then really *too* late—and must I be the wife of another?—Oh! thou who first engaged the tenderest sentiments of a heart replete with sensibility—have I not read in your eyes, though your tongue has been silent, that if *I* am miserable *you* cannot be happy?—If you still wish to possess that hand, which it would be lawful prostitution

for *me* to present to any other husband, there is *yet* time to save me from a fate my soul shrinks to contemplate. Mr. Lexington is generous; he *thinks* he is beloved, or he would scorn the union he now so ardently solicits.—It is against my nature to carry on this deception; yet I cannot—I dare not say to him, my *lips* have uttered nothing but forgeries—my *heart* disavows them;—he deserves a better fate. To proceed further, would be heaping injuries on *him*, and end in my *own* destruction—perhaps in *yours*.—Consider this subject *well*; and if *you* are as miserable as *I am*, let us not be eternally separated.—See Mr. Lexington, and tell him what I have declared to you—shew him my letter, if he doubts the reality of my distresses, and permit me to say to him, that there is but one person in the world who is more intitled to my esteem than himself—that my friendship will always be his—my love, never! never! never!—I know we *must* wait the death of my dear grandmother.—Oh! what
a confi-

a consideration, that our *happiness* can be only built on her *dissolution*, whose life is still so precious to *me*, though her prejudices have so long shut up our dearest views, and made me wander in a dreary path of inexplicable error!—Should Mr. Lexington be gracious, and why should I doubt it?—to secure my future peace will be an object worthy his exertion—He is not generous by halves; he will therefore refrain from making me a subject for *malicious* observations—He will not even mention to *me* your *name*, or the cause I have given *him* for displeasure.—Was he to speak of *either*, I am so susceptible of my own imprudence, that his reproaches would wound my delicacy, and by dying on the spot I should expiate my offence in his presence.—I shall be distracted till I hear the steps you have taken, and what *success* has attended them. I expect to-day Mr. Lexington will dine with us as usual, and I must, as usual, appear in the *detestable* mask of *marked* preference; it never can be pulled

off until security and tranquillity are again restored to the agitated mind of

MARY MONTAGUE."

Continuation.

I could not be with this extraordinary *Mary Montague*, and her extraordinary *grandmother*, when one was reading the original and one the copy of this *curious fabrication*, but I can suppose them actuated by similar thoughts and similar emotions. The season of inconsideration with other girls, has never appeared in the conduct of Miss Montague: a mind so cultured as hers has been, might be called a perfect forcing-house for ripening those qualities which are latest in coming to perfection,—It is much more difficult to teach a young female how to think with judgment and act with candour, than how to turn out her toes, or run her elastic fingers over the keys of an harpsichord.

Oh, innocence! what an anodyne art thou

thou against the severest attacks of misfortune!—Thou fearest neither the malignant eye or venomous tongue of slander;—*truth* is thy invariable friend;—sooner or later she expands and brings to light all thy virtues, whilst guilt shrinks from thy refulgent brightness.—Guilt is a *base* reptile, trembles at every foot that approaches, fearing to be discovered and trodden under foot; fraud and falsehood are its *weak* allies;—like the mole, this triumvirate works beneath the earth, avoiding every ray of light, lest they should be detected, and lashed with the scourge of infamy.

Never did innocence shew itself with brighter illumination than in the countenance of your grand-daughter, whilst her steady eyes were examining the feigned characters calculated to stigmatise her as the most perfidious of her sex. Having gone through the diabolical forgery with a degree of composure that astonished even me, who know of what great things her soul is capable, she refolded the paper, presented it to Lexington, and

and said, "You no longer, Sir, believe me to be the author of *this* letter?"—"Let my penitence," cried he, "atone for my crime that I *ever* did believe it (he fell on his knees before her): I will never rise till you say I am forgiven." She looked abashed at his humility; and as if she feared it would be offensive to *some* part of the spectators, she extended her hand with a beautiful but agitated motion, and besought him to get up.—"Ah, there is nothing in your conduct," said she, "by which I can be *gratified* in pronouncing your pardon—the writing on this letter would have deceived my own senses, had that been possible—I owe you a great deal of gratitude for your *acquittal*, but no resentment for your *condemnation*."—"This is as it should be," said the Duchesse.—The Duke added something to the same effect.—I believe I was not quite silent; but I am willing to pass over every thing that obstructs my way to the conclusion of this conference—even the transports of Lexington—for,

though

though extremely luxuriant, they were not yet arrived at their full growth.

I am going to tell your ladyship, using as few words as I can, how he accounted for the recovery of his senses, after Lord Auberry had dispossessed them by planting in his heart the poisoned dart of jealousy.—His lordship would not part with him for the remainder of the night—bottle succeeded bottle—he drank freely, but the agonies of his mind prevented the wine from taking its usual effect. At break of day he called at the —, and ordered post-horses to be got ready—sent for his man to give him directions.—He then threw himself on a sofa to wait his coming, and fell asleep, from which quiet state he did not awaken to one of wretchedness till the morning was far advanced; when dispatching his valet to make ready for their departure, he proceeded to Grosvenor Square, where Lady Auberry will recollect how *prettily* he behaved; yet take it altogether, he was not much amiss neither. I have before mentioned

tioned to you, in beginning to speak of Lexington, that he was not informed of the Duke's indisposition by Lord Francis, but received the intelligence through a private correspondent, who also, by way of sending him the latest news, repeated the whole story of Sir Ashton Montague and Lord Auberry having united to displace Miss Montague from her paternal and maternal estates, cursing the villains who had injured so much innocence and beauty.—Poor Henry's eyes were opened as if by enchantment. *Auberry* the persecutor of *Mary*! If *this* was founded in *fact*, Auberry could not be the *lover* of *Mary*.—In a moment the riddle was expounded—effulgent truth flashed upon his perception, and told him he had been betrayed—that *Mary* was a victim, himself an idiot, and Auberry a scoundrel.—Five days and as many nights he travelled with unabated ardour, goaded on by his conscience, which smote him with the violence of an enraged enemy.—He honoured me with his first visit; he laid

laid his wounded mind open to my inspection, and I poured upon it the balm of consolation. If any thing of uneasiness remained, it was all done away on his first interview with the Duke and Duchess of Cleveland.

My only motive for not telling your grand-daughter, when I first saw her, what was the present disposition of Henry's mind, proceeded from my perfect knowledge of a certain great lady's humour, who loves to have every thing in her own way, and has taken the compliments I paid her, by not interfering, in very good part.—But to go on with my story.

Continuation.

WHILST Lexington was relating his correspondent's account of the injustice done to Miss Montague by her *infamous* relations, her colour came and vanished again, with the delicacy and rapidity of such quick sort of lightning as one sees often

often emitting its radiant flashes in a clear calm summer's evening; she looked at the Duchefs—at me—as if she would have said, “The Duke knows nothing of all this.”—Her Grace caught the expression, and replied to it, as if it had been made in words—“Don't be silly, child, and fill up your head with fancies: the Duke knows it all.” “I do indeed,” cried his Grace, rising and folding his arms round her, “I know how *unworthily* thou hast been treated, beloved daughter of Montague! in *my* heart your father survives.—What *his* transports would have been, had he lived to see thee *great* in prosperity—*greater* in adversity—are my *own* by adoption. If I have the affection, why should I not have the authority of a parent, and *command* you to make us all happy?” I hardly know how to proceed. I said I should cheat you of a few tears, and now will be the most proper time for me to set about it.—Do not restrain them, revered Lady Auberry; they are the children of joy, and will bear off in
their

their sportive passage those troublesome and weighty taxes which felicity seldom fails to lay on when she visits by surprise. You may now see your grand-daughter at the Duke's feet, eloquent — interesting — pathetic — no, that will not do, it is not *half* enough: besides, it equally belongs to Lexington, who was kneeling by her side—*she* pouring out the effusions of gratitude to her generous friends—*he* imploring to be reinstated in the affections of his lovely mistress. I feel the description is a bad one; but I can make it no better, unless I had recourse to the Pantheon, where under certain similitudes the divine attributes are deified: there I might find some figures to assist my lagging, languid talents; but as I am no heathen, I shall keep on with christian truth and christian plainness. It is still more impossible for me to tell your ladyship what was *said*, than what was *looked*, by writing, as by speaking; the thing may easily be overdone—the imagination is apt to take offence, if the balance of power
is

is entirely on the side of words, and the strongest meanings are sometimes entirely explained away by their interference.

I have often delighted to dwell on the praises of Mary; but I hope I have *never* told you that Mary was *faultless*. If I have been so foolish, I retract with all my heart; for I have discovered in the composition of her mind so much delicacy, pride, or call it what you will, as stands to all intents and purposes in lieu of headstrong wilfulness, which I thought in our yesterday's contest we never should have conquered.—*Humility* was her plea, forsooth: other people, who had not the *same* excuse to make, were as *self-willed* as she could be, and a great deal more arbitrary. However, it ended thus—that last night the same writings, which have been so long prepared, were privately executed; and this morning—yes, dearest Lady Auberry, my soul rejoices whilst I tell you—*this* blessed morning your beautiful, amiable grand-daughter became the bride of a man whom I lately thought so unworthy

unworthy—whom I now think so worthy of the treasure he possesses.—I lay down my pen to give you a moment's breathing time.

Continuation.

AFTER we had gained something like a victory over those phantoms which the dignity of her spirit opposed to our wishes, and to the happiness of Henry, she condescended to put on the sweetest air of entreaty you ever beheld; she besought those who had taken her resolutions captive, that she might be indulged by the grant of two petitions: one was, that the Duke and Duchess would permit her to make a visit to Riversdale; the other was, to exact a promise from Lexington, never to revenge her wrongs, either on Lord Auberry or Sir Ashton Montague.—The first exactly tallied with her Grace's own plan, and was complied with.—Henry demurred—but what are the demurs of a lover? The imperious spirit of a horse is under the control

troul of a skilful rider, and the generous spirit of man is restrained by the influence of beauty ; yet your grand-daughter, with all her powers of fascination, had some difficulty to make the fiery youth amenable to the timidity of *her* fears for his safety, and perhaps would not have been at *last* successful, had she not solemnly declared never to receive his vows on any *other* terms, which only could have reduced him to obedience. The Duchess manages every thing, and has not yet entrusted me with the whole of her designs.—The Duke is twenty years younger than he was eight-and-forty hours ago ; he loves his nephew, but adores your Mary.—To-day for the first time he dined with his family ; what a handful of happy people we were !—how transported the bridegroom !—how enchanting the bride !—I cannot tell you the soul-intoxicating felicity in which we were all overwhelmed. The Duke had procured the archbishop's license before Lord Auberry's insidious manœuvre was completed.

His Grace intended *then* to have cheated her into an earlier marriage than she was aware of, and this morning it was used to a very *good* purpose.—The ceremony took place at eleven o'clock; it was performed by the domestic chaplain—a seal of secrecy fastened on his lips and on mine, nobody else being present except the Duke and Duchess. When Henry first shewed himself in Grosvenor Square, her Grace ordered it to be reported through the house, that Mr. Lexington was returned on particular business, which would only detain him one day, and that it was necessary his being in town should be kept private. Why this caution, you will ask, when it must be known that he was come back, by his going home yesterday to change his dress?—It was all a finesse—he has not been once out of this house since he came into it; and when the porter told us at the door, on our return from Richmond, that Mr. Lexington was just gone out, it was done by her Grace's orders, who had reason to guess
H what

what would be the first question asked by Miss Montague. Miss Montague!—Well, how shall I ever use myself to call her Mrs. Lexington? I made this observation to her half an hour ago; she threw her arms round my neck, and, hiding her bashful face on my bosom, bid me remember that she was *still* the Mary of her grandmother and Lady Jane Petworth.—“ I shall think,” said she, “ you have ceased to love me, if you ever drop the endearing appellation.” A *courier* sets off with this packet at the dawn of day; so that your ladyship will have broke the seals, and know whom you are to expect some hours before you press in your maternal arms the most amiable pair that the sacred bands of Hymen ever united. The Duchess has ordered her travelling chaise to convey Miss Montague, as most of the servants still believe her to be, as far as —, where she will be joined by Henry, who, to avoid giving any cause for suspicion, does not come up with her at a nearer stage, nor will shew himself at — till the Duke’s

servants are gone back to town.—The Duchess's woman attends your grand-daughter so far on her journey, she will make it out afterwards well enough under the auspices of her new protector.—Little Jenny must fare as she can; when Mrs. Bindwell leaves them, I suppose Lexington will stuff her and her band-boxes into a hack, with his own man to console her for the loss of her mistress's company.—Mrs. Bindwell and Jenny are both in the secret, and may be depended on. When you embrace your dear children, they will tell you, their time at Riversdale is limited by the Duchess, from whom, and the Duke, you will receive by their conveyance, such letters as I am sure must delight you.—Lexington's sisters have done for themselves in Grosvenor Square;—the Duchess has made no concealment of their impertinence.—It is impossible I should tell you how much her Grace hates every body who has been the enemy of your Mary.—“My sending her away,” said she to me yesterday, “will be

fine food for all the *twittering* misses and *shall-I-go-naked* girls of quality;—I dress up her absence to *their* pallate, and season it with the appearance of disgrace, *merely* to make them the more dislike what will come afterwards: it is to please my own humour that I have managed this marriage with so much privacy, that when it breaks upon them, they may find in her good fortune their own proper punishment.”

If I go on telling you every thing said by the Duchesse, I shall never have done; I therefore only hint, that there is a plot carrying on, which I heartily pray may take effect, as it will bring all very soon into your presence, though not at Riversdale; I am sure my niece Beauclaire will side with the friendly conspirators, and your ladyship will not singly be able to resist so powerful a body.—If nature was not sometimes fatigued with her own exertions, and required to be rocked in the cradle of repose, who would ever find themselves tired when writing to Lady Auberry, *and* on a subject
so

so charming as her grand-daughter?—The insipid being who would complain of weariness, thus employed, does not love either the one or the other, with half the fervency with which they are beloved by their faithfully devoted

J. PETWORTH.

CERTAINLY I am bewitched, or I should never think of throwing so much of my precious time away in finding you amiable, when you are laid up, maimed and wounded, incapable of making me any manner of return for my civility: one letter has hardly reached you, when off goes another. I hate to be tedious, and though you are half dead, I have no other body on the face of the earth with whom I can triffl my thoughts or my observations. Where in the world can they be about in Gossamer?—they are all as much as mine—not a drop of intelligence can I pick up from that blind quack—Go into the house I dare not—you know

LETTER VIII.

Mrs. Oxburn to Sir Ashton Montague.

May 10, 17—.

CERTAINLY I am bewitched, or I should never think of throwing so much of my precious time away in finding you amusement when you are laid up, maimed and wounded, incapable of making me any manner of return for my civility; one letter has hardly reached you, when off goes another. I hate to be selfish, and though you are half dead, I have no other body on the face of the earth with whom I can trust my thoughts or my observations. What in the world can they be about in Grosvenor-square!—they are all as mute as mice—not a scrap of intelligence can I pick up from that blind quarter—Go into the house I dare not—you know
our

our haughty Duchess has forbidden me the blessings of her society. I told my maid to send and invite the upper servants to a ball, and put myself to a deal of expence that she might do the thing handsomely, but they had all *prior* engagements—hang their airs!—I believe the Duke, Duchess, men-servants and maid-servants, are gone mad; this little *Circe* has turned the heads of them altogether. There is no torture equal to bursting with curiosity: twenty guineas would I give for half an hour's dear chit-chat with even one of the *menials* of the family, but they all fly me as they would the pestilence. Yesterday the porter passed me in Bond-street, he moved his hat, I called him to the side of my carriage, he did not or would not hear me, but quickened his pace and was out of sight in a moment—this is *my* ill luck—so diligent yet so ill rewarded! I have my watches too about the square, but all the tidings they bring me are good for nothing—many carriages, they say, stop at the door, but

nobody is let in. Poor old Toovey is breaking her heart at my Lord *Duke's* and my Lady *Duchess's* displeasure—Pish, said I, they will soon be tired of their *tame* pet—are not the whole tide of nobility on *our* side?—*Well, to be sure*, this is all true—but what does Mr. Lexington say?—Oh Lord! why he has thrown her quite off, there can never be any connexion between them as long as oak, ash, and gribble grows. She *has* been a novelty—all *novelties* meet with fools to run after them, and at last they sink into oblivion. Your stately neighbours, when convinced they can hold her up no longer, will do as the rest of the world has done, and like us the better for our part in the business—*That* will be *charming!* and away she went to her carriage in a sort of hysteric something between a laugh, a cry, and a squall. Not another word—Jack Trundle is at my door, he beckons me to take a drive in his curricule. Adieu.

Con-

Continuation.

Well, to be sure, as Toovey says, Jack is an incorrigible *quiz*, but I have been amply paid for my good humour in going out with him, as you shall hear; for I am swelling with exultation, and die if I don't give it vent. Brentford lay in our road—we were passing through the town with the velocity of lapwings, when at the Three Pigeons stood the Duke of Cleveland's travelling chaise—there was nobody in it, but the horses were changing with much seeming expedition. I pulled my companion by the arm and made him rein in, whilst with my other hand I beckoned to a groom whom I knew to belong to the Duke, and asked what part of the family were travelling, and where they were going. He said it was only Miss Montague, her maid, and Mrs. Bindwell; that the two former were on their way to Riverdale, and the latter would go back again after she had seen the young lady.

two stages beyond Brentford. I enquired how long Miss Montague was to stay in the country. Always, I believe, my lady, he replied, for Mrs. Bindwell said in the hall to day, that we were none of us likely to see Miss Montague again; and then the fool ran on with such a ridiculous pack of nonsense about *her* goodness and *their* grief at losing her, as brought tears into his eyes, and sent half a guinea quietly back to my purse, which if he had not so heinously offended me by his sorrowful panegyric, I intended to have given him for his news. It was directly over with my airing—I made the heavy-headed charioteer turn his ponies towards Hyde Park Corner; in performing our drive back we were only forty minutes, and I would have flown on the wings of the wind, if any of them had condescended to have taken up my elegant figure on the tips of their pinions, so dearly do I love certain sorts of good-natured communications. I found three carriages waiting

waiting at my door, all brimful of dear good-natured creatures like your friend Car.—My servant was telling them the melancholy tidings that I was not at home, when, jumping on the pavement, I appeared before them *in propria persona*—they were electrified; open flew the doors, down went the steps, out they capered, and away we all huddled up stairs together, every one of my visitors with a card in her hand. We left the *charming* Toovey, who hobbles like an old goose, at the bottom squalling after us, I have got one too—so had I too, Montague, it came in my absence, and I found it lying on my table; we compared every one with another; the contents being exactly the same, in sending you my *own* prize you will know the precise value of all the rest.

Card.

The Duchess of Cleveland sees company on the 22d, to celebrate the Duke's recovery,

very, and another event that has taken place in Grosvenor-square. Miss Montague is not expected from Riverdale.

What a concession!—Yes, that *we* were all in the right and her Grace in the wrong—just so—well to be sure!—oh, oh! it is all up with the would-be lady. These words and ten thousand more were flying about like snow in a freezing atmosphere. I shall not stay to sort them, or tell you whom they belonged to: we were all hearty well-wishers to the cause. I thought that now I might venture to call again, and expected to complete my day of triumph by driving in a *family way* according to the *old style*; but when I stopped at the door ten minutes ago I was informed their Graces were going to Richmond for some days, and did not mean to receive any visits till the 22d. I suppose they both want strengthening after this great effort of sending home their *girl*; but I can tell them *what*, had they not given *her* up, all the

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the world would have given *them* up. I asked *Cerberus* a million of questions; the brute answered but two—Is there to be a ball on the 22d? was one of them—Yes, he believed so, for the music was bespoke. Did Mary cry when she went away? was the second—No, but she makes every other body cry, for there is not such another lady in the whole world as Miss Montague. I wonder the Duchess allows you to speak thus of a *disgraced* favourite, said I, and ordered my servants to go on. I hope, Montague, you will be in town and able to make a leg with us by the 22d; if not, you had better make up your mind about getting any more letters till the fête is over; then, if your surgeon is a blockhead and chooses to keep you in hand longer than there is occasion for, you may expect to hear again from your affectionate friend and comforter,

CAR. OXBURN.

LETTER IX.

*Aribur Mellish, Esq. to Lord Francis
Lexington.*

London, May 17, 17—

My Lord,

YOUR lordship's last letter informed me of your intentions to remain two or three weeks at ———: should you be still there, my good lord, a very few days will convey this to your hand, and as few more may, with your lordship's pleasure; wind and tide not against us, bring you back to England; your lordship's researches in foreign countries can no longer be carried to account; the Marchioness Felicia is in London, and I know not how to act till honoured with your lordship's written or personal commands, for I have now no authority to proceed by, and the apprehension

hension of committing an error makes me fearful of taking any step in the affair. Poor lady! her situation appears to be a very equivocal one, much beneath the dignity of her birth and the very great fortune to which she is heiress; in short, my lord, I will not deceive you, the Marchioness your *ward*, on whom your lordship bestowed so *much* care and so *much* money, has by accident or misfortune been reduced to servitude. I saw her with my own eyes as I passed this day through ———: her dress, which was a brown stuff gown and round coif, declared her station in the family to be a menial one: she was standing at a parlour window with only one half of the blind open, seemed very studious, and looked as if she had been weeping. I stood still observing her, to make sure that I was not mistaken—Alas! my lord, it was really the marchioness, my heart yearned at her condition; and wishing to relieve *her*, yet fearing to offend your *lordship*, I was so much confused that
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in my first alarm, for she had not observed me, I took the knocker in my hand, but let it go again, and thought I could not err by sending your lordship notice of the discovery. This being the day when the foreign mails set out, and not having a moment to lose, I am forced to delay my enquiries respecting the family where she seems to reside till this is sent off—your lordship may depend on my diligence that she does not escape us a second time. The mystery that attends her birth, which your lordship has so often told me you would not like to have revealed for her *father's* sake, makes me so circumspect in not awakening curiosity, or raising a bustle about the business, without first being honoured with your lordship's commands; in the mean time I shall be both watchful and impatient, being, my lord, with inviolable fidelity, your lordship's

Most devoted and

Obedient humble servant,

A. MELLISH.

LETTER X.

Miss Beaully to Lady Jane Petworth:

May 14, 17—

I Believe, my dear aunt, that living with a very sensible person, such a woman for instance as Lady Auberry, steadies the wild incoherency of extravagant emotions, and does a world of good to a creature so imperfect as I am. With a thousand frantic joys fluctuating from my brain to my pen, one rudely pushing before another, how could I, at least for half a year, have set soberly down to give you the detail you expect?—The example of Lady Auberry's moderation helps me; for when I consider how much stronger her feelings must be than mine, and that she makes no fuss about them—I almost feel ashamed that my own are so ungovernable.—Knowledge
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is the consequence of time, and multitude of days are fittest to *teach wisdom*.—I have got my lesson from a perfect mistress; and though I am not a very creditable scholar, yet with *much* time and *multitude*, of days, I may hope to make a better figure than I do at present.—Well, but this charming *marriage*—so exquisitely *charming*—so unexpected!—Though I have embraced and congratulated the dear Mary, though I hear Mr. Lexington proudly call her *his* adorable *wife*, yet to me it seems all like a dream—I rub my eyes, and ask if it can be possible?—How few are her years—how eventful her history—how glorious the termination of her trials!—One would think the Countess *D'Arroi*, when she wrote the beautiful Allegory of Florina, had lived in this country at this time, and meant to illustrate the character, the sufferings, and the rewards of Mary.—Pray, dear aunt, get the fairy tales written by this elegant French woman.—The one that I allude to you will find in the third volume, and must
acknow-

acknowledge that it is either a *picture* or a *prophecy*.—Instead of recommending other people's labours to your perusal, I ought to be furnishing you with entertainment from the domestic occurrences that have passed, and are still passing at Riversdale.—It is not from poverty, but abundance of matter, that I am behind-hand, keeping my darling subject so long in the back ground; but there is so much of it, that I can hardly tell which object I must bring forward—I believe it shall be Lady Auberry, when she got your delightful letter yesterday morning; for if I do not give her the precedence, all the rest will be a chaos of confusion, and nothing in its right place.—Your *courier* arrived at nine in the morning.—You know I love sleep and require a great deal of it.—My maid was gone out to ramble about till my waking time, and the family servants did not think fit to disturb me before she came back; so that I knew nothing of the matter till Lady Auberry sent up her woman with your dear
kind

kind letter to me, and with it a message to desire I would come to her as soon as I could make myself ready. I was not long in obeying these commands; your billet had let me into the grand secret.—I did not know all, but I knew enough to send me down half dressed, and in a transport of joy bordering on agony.—Instead of meeting with any thing like my own emotions in Lady Auberly, she was sitting up in her bed;—your letter, or rather letters, lay open before her, and the only symptom of *extraordinary* agitation that I could discover, was a little additional paleness, which the hasty touch of surprise had impressed on her countenance. I reined in my tumultuous gladness as well as I could; it seemed profane to approach her, who was serenity personified, with unregulated passions of any sort. “I thank you for this effort,” said she, holding out her hand, drawing me to her, and pressing her cheek to mine, “you know my good fortune, you rejoice in it more than you will confess,

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but your eyes tell me what your tongue in kindness holds back ;—you are in the right, my love, I am labouring to put my mind under a wholesome regimen—forcing it to be calm even against its constitution.—I am teaching my soul sparingly and daintily to sip from the cup of happiness, so as to be refreshed, not intoxicated.”—“ Oh ! dearest Lady Auberry,” said I softly, “ let me sit down by you ; I will not open my lips, but let me hear you talk thus for ever—make me more amenable to reason—make me wiser and better by your example.”—“ I do not want to have you any wiser or better than you are, my dear child,” she replied, with a smile that had saint and angel mingled in it ; “ you must not expect to be a philosopher until you have served as long an apprenticeship to the science as I have done.—Youth is like a blossom, that gives beauty in hand and fruit in prospect ; but age grows worse and worse upon the progress.”

What a speculation, my dear aunt ! it hangs

hangs round my fancy, and seems to have turned it quite grey.—I believe I shall immediately set about making myself a fit companion for old age, that when it steals upon me, we may not be a disgrace to each other.

Lady Auberry folded up the papers, first kissing, then laying them on her heart: “What a treasure of goodness and friendship does this packet contain!” said she; “but I have no right to keep it *all* to myself;—go then, my dear child, share with me the bounty of your excellent aunt, and make the good Sandford a partner also.—I will come to you in an hour—I shall by that time have gained strength to talk rationally, and to give rational directions for the reception of my”——She paused; I saw the effusion of tenderness which ushered in the names that were to follow, and shook her whole frame; and not to give her the pleasing pain of pronouncing them, I did as she had directed, and rejoiced over your dear letters with the dear old man, till sitting

ting down in two chairs opposite to each other, we fell into a profound silence, unable to rejoice any longer. Wrapped in this agreeable stupidity, we waited but a few moments before Lady Auberry, her face covered with smiles, and her eyes emitting all sorts of virtues, and every species of innate felicity, came out of her dressing-room. "Come," said she, holding out her arms to embrace me, and offering her venerable cheek to the salute of the humble divine, "come, my friends, *now* you may congratulate me on the good news we have received, for *now* I can bear your joys as well as my own.—I have been praying for support to that beneficent Power who laid the *weight* of this mighty happiness upon me, and by giving the praise to *God* have lightened my *own* burthen." I will not tell you what reply either of us made; it would be like desiring you to listen to the croaking of frogs when a full band of nightingales were inviting your attention. I observed her ladyship carried in her hand
a little

a little red pocket-book, which after a time, she presented to Mr. Sandford. "This," said she, "was intended as a small token of acknowledgment to you, Sir, when I thought it would be no longer in my power to make your situation in my family adequate to your merits; that *unkind* necessity which would have drawn in my *hands*, though I hope not controuled my *heart*, is by the establishment of my grand-daughter happily removed, and now, my good friend, I ask you to accept it as a *present* on her marriage; you have not indeed performed the ceremony, nevertheless that you had a *claim* to the performance cannot be disputed." As he received the pocket-book, he tried to express his thanks; they were not to be expressed in words, but he *looked* them in *full*.—He has a long train of grandchildren and great grand-children, who want his assistance, and perhaps it was the idea of helping them, through the bounty of his benefactress, that stopped up the passage of articulation.—He has since told me

the contents were bank notes for two hundred pounds.—The letters which accompanied yours to Lady Auberry from the Duke and Duchess of Cleveland, make me dote on them for their whole conduct through this wonderful affair.—I love to see the oppressors of innocence scourged for their envy and wickedness by the rods prepared for them.—Tell me of every stripe they receive.—Oh! how heartily shall I rejoice in their mortification! no doubt it will be severe enough, considering who has taken upon herself to inflict it.—You may guess by my requesting a description that I do not see any great probability of my being present to partake of the gratifying *execution*.—Lady Auberry has not said *much* on the subject of her returning to town with the bride; yet by what little she has let fall, there seems no foundation for castle building; and unless she does go to town, or my dear aunt should command my attendance on her, nothing on earth shall move me from my present situation, where
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if I do not sow the seeds of many advantages, from which, with good cultivation, I may reap fruit in my old age, it must be my own fault.—The prospect, however, is worth looking after, and should not be carelessly relinquished.

Mr. and Mrs. Lexington did not make their *entré* at Riversdale till seven o'clock in the evening.—The procession that followed and preceded the happy pair, though not so numerous or splendid as that of a monarch in the fulness of triumph, was nevertheless as respectable; and why should it not be so?—Mary is quite a little queen, for she reigns in every heart within ten miles of Lady Auberry's residence.—This neighbourhood has been her *dominion*—her sceptre *virtue*, and her crown *content*.—Before I go farther, I must stop to assure you there is no danger that our innocent rejoicings on this occasion should reach your fine town circles, and so blow the coal when the taper is not ready for lighting; on the contrary, we are so remote from the

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regions of fashion, that our trumpet of fame will never be heard within the *precincts* of St. James's.—We humble folks shun all connexion with the great bustling world;—we have even all our commodities quietly from the manufacturing towns, and have literally nothing to do with London—a journey to *that* place is almost an unheard of circumstance; and since the wretches Boden and his diabolical tribe are no longer inhabitants of our peaceful shades, we may do what we please: we may therefore allow the happy tenantry and peasantry to celebrate the wedding of their beloved young mistress, without fear of offending the Duchess, by breaking in upon her inimitable construction of rational revenge.

Lady Auberry herself had no objection that her grand-daughter should be received with public honours.—The dear woman has suffered enough already from the consequences of one private marriage in her family; and perhaps this was her reason,

though she did not declare it, for coinciding in the prayers of her tenants and dependants to meet the gracious couple a few miles from the castle, and conduct them to Riversdale.—Her change of name and expected return were no sooner known to the household, than the report spread through the adjacent hamlets as fast as one set of parish bells could convey the sounds of joy to another. Mr. Sandford mounted his sleek nag, and went to give the glad intelligence to that good creature Harvey, who, if I had a hundred lawsuits on my hands, should have them all for his adherence to Lady Auberry.—They came back together.—When we were in trouble, I saw him nearly melancholy mad;—now we are rejoicing, he is quite as mad the other way.—He desired to have the arrangement of the cavalcade, and, putting himself at the head of horse and foot, marched through the lawn yesterday at four o'clock in the afternoon, mustering from five to six hundred men, women, and children, dressed in their Sunday

day

day clothes, every one a *bouquet* of heart's-ease in their bosom, emblematic of the occasion, with boughs of laurel in their hats, or something green to resemble laurel.—It was a charming sight; so thought Lady Auberry, who signified her approbation of their ardour and good discipline by more than verbal testimonies. Mr. Sandford was deputed to make out a list of the names, numbers, and abode of every family, all of which are to be largely considered in her extensive plans of inexhaustible benevolence.

When we sat down to dinner, she could eat nothing.—I saw what was the cause, and that every lagging moment which intervened between expectation and certainty, as it crippled out of sight, carried away some small portion of her composure, and left behind it an increase of anxiety.—I was not officiously troublesome in recommending particular dishes to her appetite, or seemed to take notice that it wanted courtship; for I have always observed, and

I know it by experience, that when the mind is oppressed, either by joy or sadness, it will much sooner move off its own burthen, and much more effectually, than if another comes and strives to shove it away: the tears have often come into my eyes, and would have overflowed, had any body looked tenderly upon me at that moment; but meeting with no observer, when they peeped out at the door, they have gone quickly back again.—As a proof how well my system answered, Lady Auberry dropped the pensiveness she had fallen into—recovered her spirits, and took her coffee as usual. “I am convinced,” said she, “I have been behaving in a very untoward sort of way, though you have been so good as not to take notice of my mind’s indisposition.—I should be really very glad to understand the nature of my own feelings, if that was a knowledge to be acquired.—Here am I,” continued she with a smile of self-ridicule, “like a spoilt child, surrounded by indulgences — His prayers
7 granted—

granted—his wishes complied with—the most extravagant of his hopes realized—he frets—is peevish—will not eat—cannot tell what is the matter with him—*something* is still wanting—which *something* is, that having *all* the good things within his reach, he does not know what he shall ask for next—such is the frailty.” She was proceeding, when a distinct though distant shout put a stop to her observation.—We threw up the sash—saw nobody—but soon heard the shout repeated, and perceptibly nearer. Lady Auberry caught hold of my hand, and, rising from her chair, ventured to look out. I felt her tremble exceedingly, and wished for her sake the first interview was over. A servant in the Lexington livery came swiftly up the avenue; but her eyes were stretched far beyond him; and before I had distinguished any thing like a carriage, she sunk down again into her chair, exclaiming with folded hands, “Blessed God, I have seen the heads of their horses!” I thought she might faint, and gave her my salts, but she put them

from her.—“I am not faint,” said she, “I am only dying with excess of pleasure.—Go!—oh go!—and”—The crash of the wheels on the gravel made me wish to go down and receive our dear guest, but the fear of leaving Lady Auberry alone nailed me to her side.—Do you expect, dear aunt, that I am to tell you the door burst suddenly open, and that Mrs. Lexington rushed into the arms of her grand-mother?—Indeed it was not so, nor can I tell you how it was.—I only know that I saw her one moment an aerial being, the spirit of tranquillity, if you please, gliding sylph-like over the floor—and the next at the feet of Lady Auberry;—that the sweetest tears were shed at this meeting, which pleasure ever inspired, or rapture ever let fall. Mr. Lexington did not present himself till the venerable parent of his Mary had recovered from the first struggles she had to maintain with joy of that exquisite kind, which to a soul so susceptible, at an age so advanced, is sometimes more powerful in

its operations than its contrary extreme.—The dark and gloomy complexion of grief gives warning of what it is capable, and bids the mind be on its guard; but joy darts upon us with a countenance so flattering, that whilst we embrace it as a friend, we hug it to our own destruction. I have sat up the whole night to finish this letter, because I would not break in on any of the charming to-morrow.—Certainly marriage is a great beautifier—such a one as this, I mean, where the hearts, proud of being consulted, throw themselves into every feature to proclaim that interest has nothing to do with their alliance.—The enchanting Mary was never half so enchanting as now that she is the wife of Lexington—the amiable Lexington, not half so amiable as now that he is the husband of Mary. Lady Auberry takes her eyes from the one, only to fix them on the other.—Who can tell the fond messages of love they are charged with, whilst in the act of contemplating these favourites of felicity?

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licity? It is equally impossible to describe the tender affection—the reverence—I might almost say the devotion, with which they adore this adorable parent.

Nothing could reconcile us to so early a separation as the 19th, but the assurances we receive from yourself, as well as the Duke and Duchesses, that you will all escort them back again to Riversdale, soon after the *fête* on the 22d is over. The greatest of my happiness on this occasion will proceed from that tender affection, and inviolable duty, with which I am my dearest aunt's

ANNA BEAULY.

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LETTER XI.

Lady Jane Petworth to Lady Auberry.

May 15, 17—.

WILL this letter have the good luck to reach Riversdale before the proud Lexington and his fortunate Mary leave it? Be that as it may, the communications I am about to make you, my dear Lady Auberry, will ensure their own welcome. I have a new adventure to relate, and will give it in as few words as possible:—Yesterday I left the Duke and Duchess of Cleveland at Richmond, and went to visit a friend who lives two miles beyond Eggham: in passing through that pleasant village my attention was arrested by a vast concourse of people assembled round the door of the principal inn: a litter stood

before it, from which several men, two of them in the Montague livery, were assisting somebody who seemed incapable of helping himself. Affailed by a confused idea, which I can find no words to express, I pulled the check and enquired the name of the invalid, but could get no information: the same impulse that moved me to ask the question carried me still further; I got out, followed him into the house, and ordered my servants to put up: nobody was at leisure to shew me a room, so I turned into a parlour on the left hand; and having rung the bell several times, at last the mistress came with many apologies for the inattention of herself and family, which she said had been occasioned by the arrival of a poor gentleman in the very act of dying, and had thrown them all into the greatest consternation. The door was left half open. I observed one of the men who had come with the sick person passing it in much haste: he looked round, saw me, and in taking off his hat I knew him to be

a ser-

a servant who, after living with me ten years, in a drunken frolic got himself enlisted for a soldier. I dispatched the woman for refreshments, and beckoned him to come in. "So! John," said I, "you have regained your liberty, I see: pray who is your present master?"—"Sir Ashton Montague, my lady; but I must soon look out for another—he is dying, and I am going for more doctors." I could now account for the *presentiment* that forced me into the house, and I learnt from John, that Sir Ashton's horse throwing him some days ago, he had since the accident happened been detained in a country place, where not finding the hurt he had received in his leg likely to grow better, he was on his way to town for further advice. Though obliged to travel in a litter, the surgeon who attended him before travelled with him, and did not apprehend any danger till they came near Egham, where he was taken so ill that he could go no further; all the doctors in the neighbourhood were

sent for, and he was proceeding to fetch others from London, but was sure his master would not be alive by the time he should get there. Poor wretch! thought I, then the vengeance of Heaven has indeed overtaken thee. I found he had been carried into a room opposite to that I occupied. John being dismissed, the woman brought me what I had ordered. I asked her how Sir Ashton Montague did—"I have just carried in a fomentation of spirits (she said), and never saw such a miserable object: the mortification is so rapid that one can almost see it run up his leg: there are two of our surgeons with him now, besides the gentleman who attended the litter: they have all told him nothing but immediate amputation of the limb can give him a chance of life."—"And what does he say to that?"—"Oh, my lady, he weeps like a baby, tears the hair from his head, and cries out upon some lady so piteously as would melt marble to hear him."—"Can you tell me the lady's name

name on whom he calls?"—"I thought it was the same with his own, at least it sounded to me very like Montague; he must see her, he says, before he will submit to the operation."—"Go (said I) with Lady Jane Petworth's compliments, tell him I am in your house, and shall be glad if I can be useful to him." I trembled with agitation till I knew what would be the return of my message; to see him I was resolved, but in the situation to which he was reduced I wished my visit might rather sooth than distress him. It was full ten minutes before she came back, and then said, that when he heard my name he had fainted, and was but just recovered: he bade her present his thanks for my goodness, and would see me in a quarter of an hour; that he had ordered every body out of the room but his valet, who, she added, is to let your ladyship know when he is ready to receive your visit. It was more than an hour before I heard any more from the sick man, and I will defy you to guess

guess in what agonies of suspense I passed this uncomfortable interval. At length the servant the spoke of appeared ; he delivered me a large packet curiously sealed, together with Sir Ashton's compliments, who referred me to the papers for an explanation why he found himself necessitated to decline the honour I intended him. I desired he might be told that I should continue where I then was some hours longer, and if in that time he happened to change his present determination he might command me.

The short moment I was speaking to this man, my fingers were busily employed in sounding the depth of the packet: it was thick, it seemed to promise much, and my heart leaped to my throat on tearing the seals asunder, when I saw several papers that were turned yellow from keeping—I will hold you no longer in suspense—I am in possession of the stolen will—of the certificate—of all the credentials that can restore your injured grand daughter

to her mangled massacred honours.—
What shall we say to this great and providential event, except we exclaim with the Royal Prophet, “The Lord executeth righteous judgment for all those who are oppressed with wrong!” After I had kissed, pressed, and welcomed back these dear long lost papers like a frantic enthusiast, the next I cast my eye on was a smaller packet which contained several sheets of paper fully written on all sides, without a seal, and addressed to Miss Montague. The Duchess has the original, and will not let it out of her hands; so you must be satisfied with as many of the contents as my memory is able to furnish, till the whole can be laid before you on our happy meeting at Riversdale: till then I shall say nothing of the energy and pathos with which it is written, but, leaving the spirit behind, collect the matter in as short a compass as I can. He had contracted the habits of friendship for Lord Auberry; at a very early period they had pursued
their

their studies together, and Mrs. Pledell's house was his second home—*she* was artful, *her* daughter handsome—they laid a plan to draw in his affections, and succeeded. Flattered by their endeavours to please, he proposed himself to Mrs. Pledell, who assured him of her readiness to accept him for her son-in-law, provided he was not so much his own enemy as to oppose her plans of reinstating him in that part of the Montague estate from which he was excluded by the marriage of his relation with Lady Mary Pledell, and the existence of a daughter by that union; which plans being accomplished, no objections on her part should thwart their inclinations, provided till then their attachment to each other was carefully concealed, not only from her son, but all the rest of the world. The wretched penitent says, he yielded to this compromise with difficulty, but grew every hour less and less reluctant, till at last his heart became perfectly callous, and he gave himself up to the absolute government

ment of these female harpies. Before Lord Auberry passed over to the continent, he told the ladies of his family, as well as his friend Sir Ashton, the engagements he had entered into with your grand-daughter, and spoke of his divine Mary in terms that convinced them it would be no idle business to make him abandon the pursuit. Mrs. Pledell constrained her rage in his presence, coldly observing that he could not have chosen a wife from any family so *disgusting* to her—yet she was sensible that he was *too* much his *own* master for *her* to interfere in the matter. But when the triumvirate were retired to their own private council, the malignity of her hatred and revenge knew no bounds: yet even at this crisis her cunning got the victory over her passions; and to remove all future suspicion she smoothed her brow, met her victim with smiles, and suffered him to entertain her on the subject of his love without displeasure, telling him, that though her dislike to the Dowager Countess was

unconquerable, she would endeavour to give Miss Montague, who had never offended her, such a reception, as his wife, that should leave him no cause to be dissatisfied. Miss Pledell talked of her sister elect with even less reserve and much more apparent kindness. The treacherous mother's next step was to gain the sight of a letter written by Miss Montague, which opportunity Lord Auberry, proud of her mental endowments, willingly gave her. At first she looked it slightly over, then read it more attentively, crying out, "This girl *must* certainly be *extremely* amiable; I do not remember ever to have seen a more charming letter. Allow your sister, added she, to take a copy of it for me, that when ever my old prejudices return I may know how to conjure them away by the talisman of her unaffected virtues." The request flattered his love, he obeyed her commands; and Miss Pledell retired not only to do what her mother had *desired*, but what she knew her mother *intended* should be

be done. At their next meeting she gave it back to him with many warm encomiums on its merits; and these ingenious contrivers had the pleasure to see a very masterly proof of Miss Pledell's knack at imitation pass undetected, though not unperused, into his lordship's pocket-book, they having put a copy under the envelope, and detained the original for future occasions. Sir Ashton accompanied his friend abroad, and for many weeks no interruption was made in the correspondence between Miss Montague and Lord Auberry: absolute silence afterwards ensued by the stale trick of taking up whatever was written by either party; Mrs. Pledell managing on one side the water, Sir Ashton on the other. Auberry, in a state of suspense he was not able to support, was about to return before he had scarcely entered on his travels; when, just in time to prevent his intentions, a letter arrives, written, as he supposed, by the fair hand of his passionately beloved Mary, in which she
assures

assures him, that though she had much esteem for him, yet as her dear grandmother was well informed of Mrs. Pledell's reluctance to their union, every former purpose was superseded by the resentment she naturally felt at seeing Lady Auberry treated with so little consideration; therefore, to avoid exposing her to further insult, she had that day received the vows of a husband whose family did not think themselves humbled by her alliance. She signed this by her new name of Barford, a retired man of fashion, who Auberry had often heard resided about twenty miles from Riversdale. I cannot stay to tell you all his extravagancies on receipt of this curiously fabricated epistle, I must take them up at a more interesting period; Lady Auberry, whose imagination is as lively as at sixteen, will easily conceive them. Sir Ashton dragged him from place to place, and from pleasure to pleasure, though of all that are commonly so called, the only one to which he seemed
in

in the least sensible, was the pleasure of intoxication. In this condition these travellers got as far as Milan, where his lordship grew refractory, would proceed no further, neither mix with company, go out, or suffer himself to be seen, though Sir Ashton, who was quite of another turn, threw all manner of temptations in his way, and at last hit on one that had its effect. A young adventures, who calls herself the Marchioness Felicia, and lived at Milan in a style of splendour which surpassed all example, was at this time much talked of, not only for her magnificence, but the doubtful mode by which it was maintained; her beauty and accomplishments engaged the general conversation more than either or both together. She had not been long settled at Milan, where she passed in the opinion of many for the mistress of an old foreigner, who had purchased the marquise to gratify her haughty spirit, and lavished oceans of wealth to appease the demands of her vanity. Every thing

thing Sir Ashton heard of her charms fell so short of what they deserved, that he got himself introduced to a female friend, who passed for her chaperone; he soon made some interest in the family, and contrived that the young lady should be thrown in the way of Lord Auberry—They met as if by chance—she knew how to play him off—he was impressed by the seeming modest dignity of her demeanour, and confessed she was divinely beautiful. Sir Ashton had hopes—he waited on the companion, to whom he made certain proposals in the name of his lordship, which were scornfully rejected, with such mighty eulogiums on the *virtue* of her ward, that the crafty baronet was forced to accept her assistance in a way not the most easy that he could have chalked out for his friend's accommodation; but she still called her young charge a paragon of reserve. He was obliged to consent that a sham ceremony should cover those scruples of virtuous pride which never could be conquered

quered by bribes, sophistry, or even love itself. In conformity to the plan was the execution; Miss Montague, faithless, lost to him for ever—the Marchioness irresistible—the confederates perfect Machiavels—Auberry *but* a man—his tender passions fainting, not annihilated, revived at the tender glances of approving beauty, and he suffered himself to become the captive of their devices. Whether the girl was intrusted with this fraud by her confidante, Montague is uncertain; he supposes she was, and that the mock marriage was a plan concerted between them to give the little adventures larger claims on his bounty when he should choose to get rid of her. The pretended ceremony was performed by a creature of the countess's procuring (for this companion too called herself a woman of quality), who, she assured Sir Ashton, had the honour of bearing a commission in the regiment of ———, and so entirely devoted to her that she would answer with
her

her existence for his silence and fidelity. In the arms of his lovely Italian Lord Auberry began to find some consolation for the perfidy of his first love; his visits were made with so much caution, that nobody suspected he was known to these intriguing ladies. Poor Montague had gone far in the track of villany, but did not choose that his steps should be pursued even by his own accomplices: he therefore wrote to the Pledells, pretending this private marriage was contracted without *his* concurrence; but added, by way of consoling them, that some good consequences were likely to ensue; it would cut off all possible pretensions to his cousin when he should discover that she had entered into no new engagement, and, by leaving her without so powerful a protector, make his own succession to the Montague estates much more practicable; besides which, by the management of his passions, and playing off his hopes and his fears against each other, he should get him so entirely under

under his subjection, as to make him join in every act of revenge they might choose to inflict on their inveterate foes, the haughty dowager and her ambitious granddaughter.—He tells them he has persuaded Lord Auberry, the marriage being private, still to keep it so, as the best means by which, on their return home, they might lead him into a labyrinth of perplexities, and make him do whatever they pleased. The lady, he added, being of a doubtful character, together with Lord Auberry's not being at liberty to choose for himself till he had completed twenty-five, by the will of the late lord—on one or other of these chances he had no doubt at a *proper* time they should have it in their power to disannul the foolish connexion: all *this* he told them, but not a word of the cheat that had been practised to a *certainly* on Auberry, and *possibly* on his wife. Montague permitted him to enjoy the felicity of his new situation but a few weeks; when thinking it time they should be separated,

he contrived that every disadvantageous report that had circulated of the Marchioness Felicia should reach the ears of Lord Auberry, with such proofs of her being a mistress before she was a wife, as perfectly to derange his reason, if it ever had been steady since his first disappointment. In this condition Sir Ashton dragged him from Milan without bidding her adieu; his confidential servant was left behind to deliver her a note written by Auberry, whose hand was guided for the purpose: it consisted of these few words—
“ You are no longer my wife —the laws of my country and your own shall rid me of you—If you follow me, I swear by the great God of Heaven, the first moment I see you shall be the last of your life.”—
What became of her afterwards Montague does not know, but supposes she is dead, or gone to her old extravagant lover, as she certainly stole away from Milan soon after they quitted it. They staid a short time in Paris, where as, soon as his senses
were

were a little collected, Sir Ashton introduced him to a real marchioness, a married woman, handsome and fascinating, who came with him to England, and is but lately gone back with her husband. But this was an attachment in which neither the head nor heart was consulted; and nothing less than Sir Ashton's absolute government could have made him submit to the incumbrance, fastened on him with no other design, than in hopes that her powers might restrain him from any very desperate violence, when he should find out that Miss Montague was not the *betrayed*, but the *betrayed*. I really can proceed no further in a business so full of iniquity: the steps by which this unfortunate victim was led to his destruction are too various for any pen but that of Sir Ashton Montague, who has traced them accurately, and to whose manuscript I must refer you for the detestable particulars.

In a separate paper addressed to myself, and written after he had received my mes-

gages

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sages,

sage, he apologises for not being able to see me.—How penitent, how pathetic is this poor miserable object!—Though my heart shudders at his unprecedented crimes, it melts at his sufferings.—He has requested me, when I go to town, that I will call on Lord Auberry, and tell him, he owes his conversion to a letter he received from that injured friend during his confinement, the contents of which hung so heavily on his mind, that to get rid of them he had recourse to reading; but no other book except the Bible falling in his way, he opened it for the first time in his life, and found out that he had still a choice left between a blissful eternity and an eternity of torture.—In humble hope of the former, he has unveiled a long list of crimson enormities, and given up the names of all his associates, amongst which are many that do no honour to nobility, some that are a blot to science, and others a disgrace to nature. I did not leave Egham till the town surgeons were arrived, and the operation just going

going to be performed.—I slept that night at my friend's—sent twice to enquire how Sir Ashton did—had the satisfaction to hear that he suffered the amputation with great fortitude, and was as well after it as could be expected. I passed by the door on my way to Richmond the next morning, and saw one of the faculty, who told me the symptoms were still favourable;—but the return we have got to our message this day is of another complexion, and great apprehensions are entertained that the mortification is again shewing itself. If I begin any thing about the Duke and Duchess, I shall never have done.—Not quite unmixed with sadness would have been our joy, had it come unalloyed by compassion.—So sudden the flash—so bright the effulgence—our emotions might have been more lively, but they would have been less supportable.—Adieu, dearest Lady Auberry, &c.

J. PETWORTH.

LETTER XII.

Mr. Lexington to Lady Auberry.

May 20, 17—

PRAY, said I, is she not *my* as well as *your* grand-mamma?—What vanity to suppose a letter from *you* will be more acceptable to Lady Auberry than a letter from *me*!—This is only a little matrimonial debating, my dear madam, that has just been passing in a family way. Mary and I are both so jealous of your favour, that it was impossible not to dispute which of us should first have the honour of appearing before you on paper.—I put her in mind of your charming lecture on *submission*, and how very obedient Miss Beauly promises to be when *she* is so fortunate as to get a husband. I bade her go and renovate by repose the fire of her eyes, which the tears she has shed

for

for a penitent, I hope a pardoned, sinner has nearly extinguished.—She has a tolerable temper enough—I have no great fault to find with her—and now that she is taught her duty, has yielded up the point for which we contended, and is gone out of my sight, I shall, as the ladies say, take up my pen, and tell my dear grand-mamma all about it.

I never experienced pleasanter days in my life, than those which immediately followed my banishment from Riversdale, except those which I spent at Riversdale in your Paradise.—Eves were multiplied; but though I was forced to leave two of them behind, I carried off *one* who contrived to make a Paradise for me out of the dustiest roads through which I have ever yet had the felicity to travel. About the close of the third day, the charm vanished;—my enchantress would not disobey the commands of our kind but impetuous aunt.—We separated; and till we met again in Bruton Street, I had no idea it could

be the *same* world which I inhabited six hours before. We were met at Lady Jane's by my uncle and aunt; and here it seems we are to be confined close prisoners till her Grace's plan is completed.—It is wonderfully whimsical all this; but I make no resistance, as Mary is to be left with me, to see that I am taken care of.—Montague ceases to be the object of our censure, contempt, or pity.—He died a few hours after Lady Jane sent off her last letter; but my adorable wife, forgetting her wrongs, weeps for what may be the consequences of his crimes in the place where he is gone, and accuses herself as the innocent cause of his committing them.—His family vault will close up his remains on Thursday, and my aunt has put off the declaration of our marriage for some days. This is a concession to delicacy, and your angelic granddaughter receives it as a peculiar bounty: for my part, I do not care how or when it is declared—*she is my own*, and I am satisfied.—Poor Auberry! the more sensible I
am

am of that felicity out of which he has been cheated, the more I learn to commiserate his destiny, yet I am only compassionate by halves—I would not that his fate had been reversed for the universe.—There are not *two* Maries in the world; and Auberry's happiness would have consigned Lexington to wretchedness. Lady Jane, who visited him since the death of Montague, tells us, she has been let into a secret, but is not yet at liberty to disclose it—though I know by the smiles of my divinity, that she is not *quite* so much in the dark as she wants me to believe. “How all you dear ladies love a mystery!” said I to Lady Jane. “Give me up this, and I shall fill half a quire to my grand-mamma; or, if you will keep it to yourself, somebody must finish my letter, whose tender eloquence will give Lady Auberry no cause to regret that you are so cruel as to deny me a subject.” Oh! here she comes again! and with her such a substitute as you will not be able to reject.—Her pretensions are these:

A form o'er which the eyes unsated rove,
 A face the seat of beauty, soul of love!
 A wit corrected by the rules of sense,
 Inspir'd by joy, rein'd in by diffidence.
 Obtrusive never--let this sketch suffice,
 Or read it fuller--in her husband's eyes.

Mrs. Lexington writes:

I have heard you, my dear grand-mamma, very often observe, that it is ungrateful to return a favour exactly in kind as soon as received.—I have but one way to avoid this awkward predicament; for, if I write on, it is impossible I should not tell you all my sentiments for this too partial husband. I shall therefore satisfy myself with assuring the most beloved of parents, that the happiest of all happy beings is

Her dutiful and
 affectionate grand-daughter,

MARY LEXINGTON."

That

That title I dispute with the whole
world. Superlative happiness is the fortun-
ate lot of

Your ladyship's dutiful
and affectionate grand-son,

HENRY LEXINGTON.

LETTER XIII.

Lady Jane Petworth to Lady Auberry.

May 25, 17—.

LEXINGTON I find has been complaining to your ladyship, of my having a secret with which I would not entrust him. —The charge is a true one, and you will see my reason for this reserve, when I unveil the mystery to you, as I have already done to our little council of *five*. The individuals who make up this number are easily ascertained—the young peoples return, one from the continent, the other from Riverdale, being events not understood out of our family circle, any more than the restitution made by Sir Ashton Montague, the *last best* action of his life.—There is something so sacred in a request issued from the bed of death, as makes the perform-

performance of it a debt of conscience. It was this sentiment that hastened me to town the day on which that unfortunate man closed his dismal account of life.—To break it as well as I could to Lord Auberry, and to deliver the message with which I was intrusted, I called at his door the next morning, and asked for the house-keeper — There was no house-keeper — Could I see any one of the upper servants?— If I would please to walk in, my lord's gentleman should be told somebody wanted to speak to him — The urchin who said this was not more than seven years old. I asked him no questions, but, stepping out of the carriage, went into a parlour, bidding him go and send the person he had mentioned. During the few moments I had for observation, the melancholy silence that reigned every where—the people that I saw ascending and descending the stair-case, passing and repassing each other with a great deal of rapid confusion, gave me reason to suppose I came too late on my embassy, and that Lord Auberry, who has long been ill,

ill, was either dead or dying.—This idea was considerably strengthened, when a decent-looking elderly man rushed into the room and cried out, “We do not know what more can be done; if you are a christian, for God’s sake come and help us.”—His sobs were so vehement, that in vain I asked him what was the matter?—He had said all of which his voice was capable, and I followed nearly as much disconcerted as himself.—The excruciating screams of a female alarmed me still more as I got about the middle of the stairs.—As soon as we had gained the top, turning a little to the right, my agitated conductor pushed open a door, and I entered a handsome apartment, where I expected to have found the remains of Lord Auberry, and thought that the screams I had heard, but heard no longer, proceeded from some of his attendants at the moment he expired.—But, good God! what a scene presented itself! The most beautiful young creature my eyes ever beheld lay extended on the floor—her clothes,

clothes, though clean, so very coarse, so perfectly disguising, that exquisite loveliness like her own could only have penetrated through them—her head, like a lily broken from its stalk, rested on the knees of a woman, who had thrown herself down by her side—Many more stood or knelt round her, some holding down her feet, others her hands; and I saw, when she recovered from the fainting into which she had fallen, that there was not one too many, the violence of her exertions being beyond all credibility.—The person who came in with me (hearing orders to call immediate medical assistance) drew me from the rest, and, clasping his hands, entreated I would suspend my commands, for that his dear lady would rather die than be seen by any body.—“*Your Lady?*” repeated I: “merciful God! can this wretched sufferer be Lady Auberry?”—“Oh! madam,” cried he with increased consternation, “my grief has betrayed me—If you have no compassion—if you have not secrecy, we are all undone!”

undone!"—"Fear nothing," I replied; "I will take the conduct of this matter on myself." I did not stay to hear what he would say, but ran down stairs and sent one of my servants to my own apothecary, to bring him immediately. I afterwards returned to the chamber, leaving directions to be called down as soon as he came.—I took advantage of the next fit of insensibility that assailed her, having sent the male attendant out of the way, partly to tear and partly to cut off the garb in which she had concealed her quality; and laying her in bed, after two or three more convulsions, every one of which exhausted the strength of her nature, and added to the length of the faintings, she at last fell into a state of stupor, something between life and death, for it could not be properly called either. The woman who seemed the most interested about her, who held her head on her lap when I came in, still sat by the bedside:—she was as meanly clad as the rest; and I should not perhaps have taken particular

undone!"

ticular notice of her, but for the extravagancy of her sorrow, and the marked silence she preserved in the midst of it.—I slid out of the room to be ready for Mr. Bellerton when he came, and will confess I had a sinister view in withdrawing, for I wanted a fuller explanation than my informer had yet entered into.—I found him on his knees outside the door of his lady's apartment.—I prevailed on him to go down with me—He had said *too* much not to entrust me with the whole, and this was the result of his intelligence :—

He had lived with Lord Auberry from the time of his birth, and always enjoyed his confidence, though unknown to Sir Ashton Montague.—He gave a short account of his lord's violent attachment for your grand-daughter, and a very pathetic one of what he suffered whilst he supposed her unfaithful.—He went on to speak of his own joy when the young marchioness Felicia fell in the way of his lord at Milan, and saw that he was greatly enamoured of

of her.—He spoke with devotion of Lady Auberry, and with reverence of her companion Madam Mellifonte, who had so far honoured him with her confidence, as to let him into Sir Ashton's abominable scheme of imposing a false marriage on the innocent young creature, which she had seemed to favour in pity to the destined victim, whose affections were entirely devoted to her lover; and this she did without letting her know the wickedness of Sir Ashton's intentions, Lord Auberry being entirely ignorant of them.—Instead of procuring a military man to personate a priest, as was proposed, she contrived the ceremony should be performed by Levists, who had taken holy orders in one of our universities, to make the engagement more binding, both parties being protestants. The person to whom I owe this interesting little history was left behind at Milan, to deliver Lord Auberry's cruel billet to his unfortunate wife, which almost drove her to distraction.—She protested her innocence in

agonies

agonies that left the poor friendly-hearted fellow no possibility to doubt the truth of her assertions ; and it was by his advice that both the ladies came to this country and concealed themselves in London, where he informed them of every step taken by his lord—of his former attachment to Miss Montague—of his renewed passion for her—of the pains taken to set aside the marriage—in short, of every thing that was going forward : — he then mentioned her visit to the Duchess of Cleveland, to find out if her husband had really renewed his addresses to Miss Montague, and said that she came away dissatisfied—That another time her curiosity was so great to see this rival, she had advertised twenty guineas for a ticket of admittance to the masquerade, where they met ; and ever since she had expressed such an affection for her, that she would have sacrificed any thing but her claims on Lord Auberry to her predilection for Miss Montague. Except on these two occasions, neither of the ladies, who had
changed

changed their names, ever left the small lodging he had procured for them in Welbeck Street, till, on Lord Auberry's being taken ill some weeks ago, his lady, who was of a disposition not to be opposed, insisted on his introducing her as his sister, whom he had sent for from the country to attend him in his sickness; and her ladyship being in the seventh month of her pregnancy, the countess thought it was proper that she should be indulged.—I was not much surprised at this part of his history, as I had perceived her situation before I heard him declare it. I asked if Lord Auberry had never seemed to recollect her through all her disguise? He said, No; the former part of his illness was so severe, and he was so often light-headed, he believed he had never known one face from another of those who were about him. He was going to enlarge on the cause of her present dangerous situation, when Mr. Bellerton came in, whom I carried immediately to the sick chamber, telling him as

we went along, that a young creature for whom I entertained a singular regard, having contracted a secret marriage eight months ago, had fled from her friends, and concealed herself in the household of Lord Auberry; that I had just found her in a terrible situation, which made me send for him, in whose skill, care, and secrecy, I could repose my trust. He promised me every thing I could desire, and we entered together.—We found her tolerably composed, but next to insensible.—The same woman whom I have mentioned before, and now knew to be Madame Mellifonte, who, disguised like a servant, had that morning come to see her, was still sitting by her bed-side, holding her hands and weeping over them.—I would have said something to comfort her, but was prevented by the engagement into which I had entered, not to betray that I knew any thing of the matter.—At first we apprehended a premature birth, but our fears soon gave way

way to better hopes.—Before I went out of the house I informed my informer of Sir Ashton's death, and the intentions with which I came there.—He told me Lord Auberry was then well enough to receive my visit—and he had been recovering so fast for the three last days, that his lady, except when he was asleep, durst not venture into his chamber for fear of being discovered; which banishment, together with the dread of soon being entirely dismissed from attending him, had preyed violently on her spirits, and at last reduced her to the state in which I first saw her.—I bade him conduct me to Lord Auberry.—Our interview was of considerable length.—I saw him the next day, and the day following.—I should be a fool to tell you all that passed on these occasions, when in a few short days you may expect a verbal detail of circumstances. Till then I have only to say, that Lord Auberry is convinced of his injustice to two of the most lovely as

well as amiable women in the world—that his former passion for your grand daughter is converted into brotherly esteem—that he adores his now happy wife—that they are never asunder—that the marriage is avowed—and that to-morrow the dear Lexingtons are to steal out from their hiding-place to look in upon the reconciled pair, and assure the penitent Auberry of their forgiveness, without which his happiness would be still incomplete. The Duke and Duchess have no objection to their making this generous and charitable visit; but it is to be conducted with great privacy, and her Grace wishes to have them at her ball, which I take to be one of the few impracticabilities that will not yield to her exertions—both Lord and Lady Auberry being reduced to so great a state of weakness, that for my own part I can hardly yet think their lives quite out of danger.—I have promised to meet her Grace in Grosvenor Square at three—It is within ten minutes
of

of the time—I can therefore only add,
God bless you, dear Lady Auberry, and
farewell!

J. PETWORTH.

LET.

LETTER XIV.

*Mrs. Lexington to the Dowager Countess of
Auberry.*

May 30, 17—

ANOTHER week and we are on our road to Riversdale! Are you prepared, dearest grandmamma, for the inundation of friends we shall bring with us to be your guests for some months at least—the Duke, the Duchess, Lady Jane?—have you room for us all?—Oh good God! how honoured and how happy is your Mary!—There are others that have promised to join our party in the course of the summer, to whom I know your doors and your heart will be open—you must bid them welcome—if for no other reason, yet for the sake of that lovely creature who is now the declared wife of Lord Auberry. My dear

Miss Beaulieu will not only forgive, but look kindly on him—Lady Jane has set her the example—Lady Auberry pleads for him—and who can resist her pleadings? Had he no penitence of his own, it seems as if Heaven might accept *her* sorrows as an atonement for his *faults*. But indeed his penitence has nearly cost him his life; and it is only since he has been assured by the kindest, the best beloved of husbands, and by your Mary, they both pardon his errors and rejoice in his felicity, that he has thrown off the load of self-conviction by which he has been long and heavily oppressed. The predilection I felt for Lady Auberry, when I only heard the sweet tones of her voice, is converted into affection—now that I have seen her matchless form, her animated beautiful countenance, that I have been told all her sufferings, that I have received her grateful caresses, and know that I am dear to her. Madame Mellefonte is also a charming woman, and is to remain with Lord and Lady

Lady Auberry—so that when you see one you will see all of them. Yesterday was our grand gala; and notwithstanding I shall see you so soon, yet I am inclined to give you a sketch of it—

The Duchess of Cleveland in continuation.

No, madam, that is impossible, she will not give you so good a representation of that affair as I shall do—So I have sent her out in Lexington's curricule, that he might enjoy the exultation belonging to him for the goodness of his choice, and I the opportunity of adding a few lines to her letter. The people I collected together at my house last night owe me no obligation—it was not their gratification I consulted—all that I had in view for them was the completest mortification I could devise for their impertinent airs, envy, and ill-nature—How I succeeded two or three instances will serve to explain—It was consistent with my plan that I should at first appear to treat your grand-daughter with very little consideration, and I make no

apology to your ladyship, because you may be sure I did not mean to disgrace her. I bade Lexington shew himself at nine, and to look as well as he could; but my niece I would not permit to join the party till twelve, and then not to flash upon us in bridal smiles and bridal attire: on the contrary, I desired she would make her *entrée* under the auspices of Lady Jane Petworth, as a guest of courtesy rather than as one who was there by invitation, and dressed with the plainness that suited her supposed humble condition. Would you believe it, madam, the foolish boy did not make his appearance for more than an hour after the time I had appointed him? — Before he was announced my rooms were stuffed even to suffocation—some of my visitors had questioned me about Miss Montague's present situation, and would have been mighty witty, if I had not stopped them by saying in an offended accent, that I did not like to be tormented with names I was glad to have changed.

I knew

I knew no Miss Montague now; for she had condescended, at my instigation, to be content with another.—This passed very well, and gained me a great deal of credit. I mentioned my nephew's return, and told his sisters drily, that I supposed he meant to select a wife from my assembly, as he was taking a vast deal of pains, I concluded, from the length of time he occupied at his toilet. They were much missed that he had not called on them; but I bade them lay aside their airs, and not expect the same devoirs from their brother they might think themselves entitled to from their lovers. The moment it was known he was come back, together with the hint I had dropped of an approaching election, all the girls began putting themselves into attitudes of attraction, playing a thousand monkey tricks with their features to set them in order, every silly mother looking towards her own black swan for a future Duchess of Cleveland. You must excuse my vanity, madam, if I

tell you that Lexington would this night have been an apology for making them all coquettes, had they not been such before, from example, education, and habit. I do not mean all neither; for I had contrived to mix with the declared foes of your grand-daughter's beauty and merit a dozen young people of her own sex, who are good like herself, and had been warmly her friends when the tide of fashion ran full against her. Henry had no trouble in looking out for partners: he knew I had chosen them for him, and he stood at the head of the set with Lady Bell Langton. Her mother, who is not a woman of *many* words, but *much* design, when the young people were all engaged, observed they were a *charming* couple, and said so much about them, that seeming to catch at the bait, without absolutely saying Madam, I understand you, I brought her at last to make downright proposals—Out it came, and I could hardly keep up the grave farce, when she told me Lord Warford,

ford, the Marquis of Battledore's son, had that very day solicited her father's approbation; but the cunning Marchioness hoped he would be refused, as she was sure poor Lady Bell had been long sensible of Mr. Lexington's perfections. She was not singular in her address—the Duchess of Northington, Lady Dawn, and some other provident matrons, for whose daughters I had provided in rotation the hero of the night, paid me great court—and if they were not quite so explicit as Lady —, their meaning was equally obvious. At length Lady Jane Petworth was announced, and your pretty unadorned Mary stole in after her without any name at all—The third dance was just ended, and every body at leisure to testify their astonishment at this poor little nobody's intrusion; but I kept them in such tolerable order as confined their impertinence within the limits of eyes, gestures, and glances, by the seeming *bauteur* with which I received Lady Jane, and the very small notice I took of

her companion, who modestly sat herself down in a corner. When her enemies saw that she was neglected by the Duke, myself, and even the person with whom she came, the spite that was before mounting into some of their fair faces quickly subsided, and none of them would have turned that way if the looks of her husband had not directed them—his tender and frequent glances no doubt made them fear he was in danger of relapsing into his former weakness. I was afraid he would have betrayed all by his indiscretion—but on the whole he did pretty well, and supported his part with a good grace till the critical moment arrived. The supper rooms were to be opened at one o'clock—it was within five minutes of the time. Lexington's partners were all so fond of him that he was quite encircled by them ; but his eyes were constantly turned to the door, through which his wife had vanished half an hour before—and at this moment re-entered, led by the Duke—her plain muslin dress exchanged

changed for one that I had provided, so splendid and becoming, that her appearance was not merely beautiful—it was a constellation of beauties.—Lexington flew to meet them: with a bent knee, he gracefully intreated to have that dear wife restored to him from whom he had been forced to estrange himself so many ages.—It was now time for me to throw off the mask.—“Some apology (said I) may be necessary both to you and Mrs. Lexington—but why should I take the trouble of making one, since we live in a happy age of freedom, where chicane and invention of any sort that can part lovers and their mistresses, husbands and their wives, are abundantly tolerated?” These few words, and the presentation of my niece to the company, had an extraordinary effect.—One might almost suppose they infected the generality of my visitors with a despair that was epidemical—so many of them were seized with sudden indisposition, that our supper party was thinned of half

those who were expected to stay. You will think me a satirist. I shall shew you that I can also be a moralist, and finish my letter by observing, that envy is an ill-contrived vice, made up of meanness and malice: it wishes the force of goodness restrained, and the measure of happiness abated: it laments over prosperity, and sickens at health. Confess, madam, this is pretty good reasoning for a Duchess. I ask a place in your esteem, and hope you will consider my desire to possess it, as some proof of the pains I shall take to deserve it.

I have the honour to be

B. CLEVELAND.

THE END.

A L L E G O R Y.

I SING a female thievish brood,
 In these bless'd days scarce understood,
 So let us call them over;
 Lean *Envy*, born before her time,
 Pert *Malice*, ever in her prime,
Le bel esprit and rover.

Youngest; and dearest child of sin
 Was *Falsehood* nam'd; through thick and thin
 'Twas strange how she would amble;
 How with her *sisters* dash away,
 When lur'd by scent of food, or prey,
 And call it but a ramble.

These *sisters* three had wealth in store,
Had hirelings, friends, and slaves galore,
And yet were not contented ;
But filch'd from every *better* name
Whatever added to its fame,
Nor of the theft repented.

They pitch'd their tents on *Honour's* plain,
And rummag'd o'er her fair domain,
Her smooth green carpets fretting ;
Tore down her fences, pluck'd her flow'rs,
And levell'd all her shady bow'rs,
From rising sun to setting.

Hymen in youth had knit the bands,
And join'd the willing hearts and hands
Of *Fortitude* and *Honour* ;
Holy *Religion* was their priest,
Whose blessing gave the nuptial zest ;
No rule she took upon her.

Their friends were few, their household small,
Of lacqueys they had none at all,
Meekness was her attendant ;
And *Fortitude* himself did wait
On his own wants, in ease or state,
Of all else independant.

Now

Now *Honour* was a female born,
And female tempers will be worn,

Whether from earth or heaven;
So *Honour*, tho' of heavenly race,
Would often shew a cloudy face,
And temper not quite even:

Unruffled she could never see
The base, despoiling *Sisters* three

For ever round her haunting;
Before her face, behind her back,
Exhibiting their thievish knack,
And all her goods disjointing.

So push'd, so worried, she spoke high,
Nay, brought search warrants from the sky,

To make them surrender
What from her premises she'd lost;
A verdict gain'd of suit and cost,
Yet still they would offend her.

Once on a time, *Honour* begun
To spin a web, nor stopp'd till done,

Uncommon was its merit;
'Twas soft, and smooth, as flowing rills,
And whiter than the Alpine hills,
Of purity the spirit.

This

This perfect work the *Sisters* vex'd,
 Their brains were very much perplex'd,
 How to possess the treasure;
 Dame *Honour* wore it next her heart;
 And how the dame and web to part
 Ask'd a *determin'd* measure.

Day after day, weeks, months, and more,
 They try'd their booty to secure,
 And at the last succeeded;
 Force would not do, *Fraud* mark'd the way—
 This envy'd web was made their prey,
Fraud's help they only needed:

Now having seiz'd the darling prize,
 So dear to *Honour's* sacred eyes,
 But to their own offending;
 Amongst themselves, and learned *clan*,
 Much strength of argument began;
 This was the point contending:

Whether 'twere better to be gone,
 And so with *Honour* to have done,
 Decamping with their plunder;
 Or stay awhile, and brave it out?
 The first was thought the best *sans* doubt,
 The last might prove a blunder.

Of common buffets not afraid,
By little dangers not dismay'd;
Yet now by fear infected;
They pant with guilt, they look around,
Scan ev'ry inch of *Honour's* ground,
And dread to be detected.

Off, off in haste! begone! they say,
Exulting bear our prize away!
On *Envy's* back they bind it;
Cries *Malice*, If we should be caught,
Nay, to the bar of Heaven be brought,
I'll find the means to hide it.

Her sister *Falseness* roundly swore,
Honour should never see it more,
Tho' she were forced to eat it;
The precious prize they bore away,
The Muse who saw their wings display,
Now blushes to repeat it.

When *Terror* counsel'd them to flight,
As their own deeds dark was the night,
Could *Conscience* more desire?
'Twas dark as we are told is hell,
Where all the sons of darkness dwell,
With their most ancient fire.

o This

This darkness but increas'd their fright,
 They wish'd to have a little light,
 Merely for what they wanted;
 A light, that only they might see—
 And trembled like an aspen tree,
 Because it was not granted.

At ev'ry sound that meets their ear,
 They cry, 'Tis *Honour* in our rear!
 Wilhing the earth to open;
 Now pause—now listen—now proceed—
 Then dashing on with mended speed,
 Forget what they had spoken.

What *Honour* said, and how she stood
 Leaning her head on *Fortitude*,
 Is not to be related;
 Or how, about *Religion* hung,
 Catching blest accents from his tongue,
 Till her despair abated.

The weeping circle let us leave,
 For sore *Religion's* self did grieve,
 And sore the theft lamented;
 The thievish *sisters* to convey,
 A long uncomfortable way,
 The *Muse* must be contented.

As o'er creation's wilds they steer,
Rocks, quicksands, mountains disappear,

At least they could not see them;
But tho' so comfortably dark,
No passenger their steps could mark,
From fears it did not free them.

Through pitchy clouds they grope their way,
Expect, yet dread, the morning ray,

As hopes or fears infect them;
What most they wish they most would shun,
By day-light they might be undone,
Yet day-light must direct them.

Alternate sway'd by-hope and fear,
They travers'd through the trackless air,

Till *Morn*, who had been sleeping,
Wak'd by the crowing of the cocks,
Op'd her grey eyes, shook her moist locks,
And at her door stood peeping.

They ask'd her, which way they should take;
But she was not enough awake

To give them a direction;
Yet, as she look'd them in the face,
She shot a glance—'twas not of grace,
But cast a deep reflection.

Where'er

Where'er it fell, on churches, spires,
It shone with gold and purple fires,
All earthly objects clearing;
London they saw beneath them stand,
The *Sisters*, joining hand-in-hand,
Bear down, no danger fearing.

They lighted near that famous horse,
Which so much notice does engross,
Because a fellow idle
Seal'd his own doom, having forgot,
I can't exactly tell you what,
'Twas stirrup, girth, or bridle.

Of lady friends a swarm they meet,
From Charing Cross to Harley Street,
Who ask them to their houses;
Bragging how well they'll be receiv'd,
And their commandments all obey'd,
By them and by their spouses.

Their daughters too would be so glad,
They almost would with joy run mad,
Such worthy friends possessing;
Vow'd no apology they'd take,
If only for their daughter's sake,
Who'd think their sight a blessing.

Envy uncurl'd her *little* nose,
Would wait upon them when they chose—

So *Malice* said, half grinning;
For once the truth sly *Falsehood* spoke,
Whispering she cry'd, A civil joke!

We owe it to our finning.

How warm the matron's bosoms glow'd!
What fervent praises they bestow'd,

Unlike to modern kindness!
With animated fervour given,
Had they such praise address'd to Heaven,
Who'd tax them with supineness?

The travellers, having flown express,
Were now for hurrying home to dress;

Their friends, in phrases hearty,
Besought, with love-inspired face,
That they would condescend to grace
A little private party.

The *Sisters* thought, then better thought,
And many weighty reasons brought,

Why they declin'd the honour;
Unfortunate that they should be
Engag'd that night to Lady C——,
They must look in upon her—

From

From thence to Lady N—— should go,
 To Lady D——, an' hour or so,
 Or much they should offend them;
 On Ladies F—— and E—— must call,
 For to her Grace of H——'s hall
 They'd promis'd to attend them.

Next morning half the belles in town
 Stopp'd at their door, were there set down,
 Females of all dimensions;
 Some learn'd, some witty, few of sense,
 Some that to beauty had pretence,
 And some with no pretensions.

Unceasingly the knocker fell,
 To call out *Cunning* from his cell,
 A porter of low measure;
 Exceeding civil to the great,
 But little people made to wait
 Upon his utmost leisure.

To ease the *Sisters* prone to fear,
 Starting at shadows, if too near,
 A sturdy guard was sentry'd,
 That guests forbidden might not call,
Suspicion stood within his hall,
 To search them as they enter'd.

He let the females all go by,
 A passport shone in ev'ry eye,
 Of their most civil meaning;
 Tall *Vanity* walk'd on before,
 Announc'd them just within the door,
 They found her entertaining.

But when, allur'd by stronger charms,
 They rush into the *Sisters'* arms,
 Oh! 'twas the bliss of blisses;
 To Ladies I—, E—, O— and U—,
 To Mrs. P— and Mistress Q—,
 And half a hundred misses.

A moment longer, *Honour*, dwell,
 Within thy captivating cell,
 I've not yet done with sinners;
 But when my Muse has spoke their part,
 She'll plaud the dictates of thy heart,
 And tell us who are winners.

What tho' thy foes have found a place
 Where seldom you can shew your face;
 What tho' vast sums they squander
 Of truth—of honesty—of sense,
 And thus your property dispense,
 She'll never keep you under!

'Tis

'Tis rather difficult, I own,
 To still the rage we both have known,
 And both from the same sources;
 I prove this adage every day,
 That good and bad will have their way,
 Nor can we stop their courses.

With moralizing, Muse, have done,
 And finish what you first begun,
 Return to *Envy's* dwelling;
 Say who comes in, and who goes out,
 Say, what the ladies are about,
 How each is each excelling.

Is it in converse sage they vie?
 Or, who's the best musician try?
 Or, for good works contending?
 Wide of the mark! my Muse replies,
 They're hatching scandal, telling lies
 With vigour never-ending!

Give us a specimen, I pray,
 Of how they look—and what they say,
 You've got them altogether;
 'Hold!' she retorts, 'misjudging bard,
 'Compel me not, the task is hard,
 'They're too much of a feather.'

I ask'd

I ask'd her if there were no men?

She answer'd, Only nine or ten,

To ladies full five hundred;

I bid her count them o'er again,

Five hundred women! so few men?

Why, sure, you must have blunder'd!

She sweetly smil'd, and thus reply'd:

'Let doubt and wonder both subside,

'For know,' and spoke it hearty—

'To one *malicious* man a score

'Of *honest* men I'll bring, and more,

'That are of *Honour's* party.'

Go on, I cry—She thus began:

'The silence was not broke by man,

'Where women were so plenty;

'Their words so numerous, and smart,

'I can't repeat a quarter part,

'Perhaps, not one in twenty.

'Dear creatures! have you been at Court?

'You've heard the wonderful report?

'Pray is my lord no better?

'How long may you have been in town?

'They say, St. Paul's will tumble down.

'I hope you got my letter?

- ‘ I been at Court !—Indeed not I !
‘ The Queen to us is mighty shy,
‘ This was by *Malice* spoken ;
‘ When *Falsehood* was presented there,
‘ Her Majesty behav’d so queer,
‘ Of confidence no token !

‘ Said *Envy*, pulling up her chin,
‘ The drawing-room will be but thin,
‘ If clos’d on *our* connections ;
‘ If we so coldly are receiv’d,
‘ And nothing that we say believ’d,
‘ Adieu to Court protections !

‘ Here for a moment chang’d the scene ;
‘ A moment’s breathing time, between
‘ That converse ever flowing,
‘ Is seldom found, tho’ very meet,
‘ For making out the sense complete,
‘ And much of grace bestowing.

‘ A female figure shew’d her face,
‘ As much at least as gauze, and lace,
‘ Patches, and paint, would let her ;
‘ The ladies rose and bent their knee,
‘ No object but herself they see,
‘ So much she look’d their better.

‘ On

On *Envy's* lips there sat a sneer,
And *Malice* cry'd, How came you here?

The ladies stood confounded;
Madam, I thought your bell had rung,
She answer'd, with a lisping tongue,
Indeed I thought it sounded.

You thought? And who bids servants think?
Said *Falsehood*, as she tipp'd the wink,

To mark their friend's confusion;
And many compliments she paid,
That might excuse her waiting-maid
For her undue intrusion.

Nay, no apology, for shame!
They all cry out, for sure she came

From the most polish'd nation;
I hope, said *Malice*, you'll not scorn
The girl because she's British born,
Her name is *Affectation*.

Then one and all they bid her stay,
You must not, shall not, go away,

We every one require
A touch of thy celestial skill,
Our bosoms with thy essence fill
High as thy own, or higher!

Malice on *Envy's* slipper trod,
And cast a kind, approving nod

On *Affectation*, silly;

That sort of nod as if to say,

Pr'ythee the silly souls obey,

'Twill entertain us highly.

The trusty *Abigail* obey'd,

Call'd *Art* and *Labour* to her aid,

Outdid her own outdoings;

Rais'd up an altar to her fame,

And proudly grafted her own name

On *Nature's* humbled ruins.

And first, she took away all ease,

By tightly pulling in their stays,

So tight, that twenty laces

It cost her to complete the job,

Whilst, ty'd up to an iron rod,

Her victims made wry faces.

This done, she would their necks adorn,

Begging they'd throw a little scorn,

To mingle with their sweetness;

Hop'd they'd believe what now she said,

That all allow'd a tossing head

More striking far than meekness.

Like Bacchanalians half seas o'er,
 From very ecstacy they roar,
 In praise of her inventions;
 They bid her do just what she will,
 They neither doubt her taste or skill,
 Or her most kind intentions.

She liſp'd her thanks, again begun,
 Bruſh'd up their eyes, their heads new ſtrung,
 Inſtructed them in talking,
 Put on their feathers, and their paint,
 Appointed times to laugh, or faint,
 With attitudes for walking.

And next, like parrots they were taught
 A ſtring of words to ſay by rote:—
 So work'd the artful gipſy,
 That, in her fetters ſafely bound,
 The happy ladies look'd around,
 And thought each other tipſy.

But for themſelves, they had no eyes
 To ſee the monſtrous diſguiſe
 To which they had ſubmitted;
 Each ſaw it miſbecame her friend,
 Wonder'd why ſhe did not amend,
 And have *her* garb refitted.—

Suspicion's voice, and somewhat loud,
 Now reach'd the gay, delighted crowd,
 And stopp'd their mighty chatter;
Falsehood on tiptoe skipp'd about,
 Her nerves disorder'd by the shout,
 She guess'd the very matter.

Envy and *Malice*, hand in hand,
 Stepp'd out the reason to demand
 Of all this wild confusion:
 Ever their thievish pranks in view,
 They heard a sound that pierc'd them through
 With dread of foes' intrusion.

You're drunk, gone mad! pale *Malice* cries;
Suspicion glar'd his squinting eyes
 In manner not quite pleasing!
 Madam, why all this rage to me?
 There is a traitor ta'en, d'ye see,
 Whose presence might be teasing.

She look'd again, and saw he stood
 In a Mendoza attitude,
 A mighty blow suspended,
 Which kept at bay a lovely youth,
Candour, the eldest son of *Truth*,
 By *Honesty* attended.

Malice,

Malice, before as pale as death,
Scarce able now to draw her breath,
Became as red as fury.

Envy was swallow'd up in grief,
Forefaw nor mercy nor relief,
Ask'd *Cunning* to protect her;
He lock'd, then barr'd and chain'd the door,
Back to the group his lady bore,
And dubb'd himself her Hector.

The female guests round *Envy* hung,
The men to dearer *Falsehood* clung,
Held her from fainting tightly;
Coax'd her to speak, and bravely swore
They'd lose their precious souls, and more,
Rather than leave her lightly.—

Cunning of *Honour* nothing knew,
Locks, bolts, and chains, all open flew,
At the celestial order;
A tiar of suns adorn'd her head,
Her limbs a snow white robe betray'd,
Trimm'd with an azure border.

Caution, with number'd steps, and slow,
Like waters deep, that silent flow,

Walk'd smoothly on before her;

Caution by *Wisdom* is approv'd,
But not by *Folly's* children lov'd,

They never could endure her.

The decent dame had made her bows,
Great *Perseverance* was her spouse,

With soul of goodly mettle;

He wore a full determin'd look,
And for his shield this motto took,

"Settled—not to un-settle."

Stern *Fortitude* had gone before,
And burst the lock of every door,

Tho' *Cunning* oft had boasted

The wards of all his patent keys
Were turn'd so many *curious* ways,

If travers'd—he'd be roasted!

And long against all force they stood:
But now they yield to *Fortitude*,

Back'd by his dear wife *Honour*,

From whom he seldom takes his eyes,
At every door that open flies

He turns and looks upon her.

Tho'

Tho' married long, she seems a bride,
Was by *Religion* deified;

He had all goodness taught her;
The happy pair so well he lov'd,
So much their harmless lives approv'd,
He call'd them son and daughter.

It always was his post to stand
On *Honour's* honourable hand,

Her left arm *Faith* supported;
Faith was a loving, holy dame,
Who for *Religion* own'd a flame,
From infancy they courted.

Before these three did slowly walk,
Or rather like a spirit stalk,

'Twas neither shade nor matter,
At least that any one could know—
Cover'd it was from head to toe,
It spoke not, nor did chatter.

Nor limb, nor feature was reveal'd,
So close the mystery lay conceal'd

Beneath a web so woven,
That man, or beast, it might have been,
Angel, or devil, nought was seen
Of wings, or foot that's cloven.

It seem'd to *Honour* very dear,
She shew'd about it as much care
As dames who young ones tutor;
Faith bade it lift its thoughts above,
Religion taught it heav'nly love,
And pointed to the future.

Next *Justice* came : he sought to tread
The print that *Honour's* feet had made,
Honour had borne and bred him ;
Now, tho' immortal, he was blind,
And never could those traces find
If *Mercy* had not led him.

His emblematic robe portray'd,
In many a deep and sanguine shade,
The terrors of his calling,
Too terrible for mortal sight,
But for the drapery of white
Round *Mercy* graceful falling.

When sun-beams on foul waters play,
All stains appear as wash'd away ;
So *Mercy's* garb, reflecting
On *Justice's* sanguinary coat,
A wondrous alteration wrought,
Its horrors half ejecting.

The scales of Heaven he even bore,
And on his flaming breast-plate wore,
In red, that blood surpasses,
“ My power’s from high !” in words so plain,
As might from pole to pole be seen
Without the aid of glasses.

Truth bore his sword : so bright it shone,
That, dazzling like the mid-day sun,
It seem’d a burning mirror ;
At once it pointed ev’ry way,
Around its edge blue lightnings play,
And flash incessant terror !

Such the *High Justice* of the skies,
At *Honour*’s call he downward flies
To ward her restitution ;
His train with hers united blend,
And kindly look as friend on friend,
Expecting retribution.

Observation trod with care,
Unseal’d his eye, unclos’d his ear,
In dusky mantle hidden ;
A never-dying torch he bore,
All mental secrets to explore,
To common sight forbidden.

Silence stood ever at his side,
 By blood and friendship both ally'd,
 He was his own twin brother;
 His robe was of a darker shade,
 His finger on his lips was laid,
 And mark'd him from the other.

The sweetest, and the loveliest pair
 That *Honour's* suite did grace, were there,
 Nam'd *Modesty* and *Meekness*;
 Nor could their garments be outdone
 By snow that glitters in the sun,
 For purity and sleekness.

White-handed *Hope*, with dimpled cheek,
 Attended on her sisters meek,
 In *Wisdom's* view they sported;
 And ever and anon they spy,
 To catch a mandate from his eye,
 Whose patronage they courted.

Wisdom with *Justice* had come down
 As pleading counsel for the crown,
 Ere sentence might be given,
 Or *Honour* gain a full decree
 Against the thievish *Sisters* three —
 Such the award of Heaven!

This counsel look'd, nor talk'd big,
Nor hid his hair beneath a wig,

On *Wisdom* be not witt;
His silver locks, and reverend beard,
So like to *Wisdom's* self appear'd,
To hide them had been pity.

His briefs were borne by *Rectitude*,
Whom *Wisdom* largely had endu'd

With wealth, from his own treasures;
Took his advice on all he said,
Pursu'd the paths to which he led,
And follow'd all his measures.

Tho' foremost of the splendid train,
His garments were exceeding plain,

Nor fanciful, nor flowing;
But fitted nicely to his shape,
Which spoke no fashionable ape,
Or aught to fashion owing.

The next to *Rectitude* was seen
A youth of most engaging mien,

The finish'd work of Nature—
Peace was his name, his visage mild,
Of *Rectitude* the first-born child,
Like him in shape and feature.

But, whilst his lineage you might trace

In every captivating grace,

He seem'd the prey of sorrow ;

Soft tears upon his cheeks repose,

Like dew-drops on the maiden rose

Ere Sol has said Good morrow !

Yet he, unruffled, still did lend

A willing ear to one kind friend,—

This friend was *Consolation*,

Who talk'd of future bliss in store,

Of love renew'd, and many more

Joys of his own creation ;

Much soothing fondness did display,

And would have wip'd those drops away,

That bitter were and galling :

His voice so mild, so sweet his look,

That weeping *Peace* some comfort took,

But still his tears kept falling.

On the moist earth his tears were sown,

His arms were cross'd, his colour flown,

A victim of displeasure ;

Th' envelop'd *Mystery* chain'd his eyes,

These words were usher'd in with sighs ;

“ There sleeps my murder'd treasure ! ”

Permit that I, to aid my skill,
Should now the vacant canvass fill

With leaders of the fashion,
The *Sisters'* household, and their friends,
Whose life or conversation tends
To spread abroad detraction.

Both rank and file, the household troops,
Who heard the cries, the yells, the whoops,
So loud and so alarming,
Burst from their dreary cells below,
To aid their ladies seldom slow,
And all the way were arming.

Audacity march'd on in front,
Not *Honour's* self could ever daunt

A brazen fiend so daring ;
To her clung *Fear*, as most secure,
But kept aloof, without the door,
And like a fool stood staring.

Shame limp'd a little way behind,
Groping about some hole to find,

Where she might hide her blushes ;
Now here, now there, with downcast eyes,
With searching glances keenly spies,
But saw nor trees nor bushes.

The colours hoisted on her cheek
 Did more of dread than boldness speak;
 To *Modesty* she struck them;
 The victor cheer'd her vanquish'd foe,
 And, gently checking, let her go;
 She us'd no force to pluck them.

In deeds of prowess none could vie
 With never-wearied *Calumny*,
 So swift on foot, so ready,
 That showers of poison'd arrows fall
 On age, on youth, on great, on small,
 Few miss a mark so steady:

Tho' menial, she was *Falsehood's* friend,
 Ready at all times to attend
 And help her, if requir'd—
 Coax *Forgery* to sign his hand,
 And *Perjury* never made a stand
 To do what she desir'd.

Deceit with varnish'd skin came next,
 Seem'd pensive, and a little vex'd,
 Now hear what had offended;
 As praying in the face of Sin,
Intrigue, and *Flattery*, both came in
 Before her prayers were ended.

What

What are you at? they bellow'd out:

We're lost—undone—Hark! what a shout!

Honour our walls environ!

Arm'd with her mask, away she ran,

Intrigue us'd nothing but a fan;

Flattery a smoothing iron.

Folly, with lolling tongue, stood by,

Fixing her lustre-lacking eye

On *Mischief*, whom she cherish'd;

By private ties she was his bride,

And as for all the world beside,

She car'd not if they perish'd.

Her shoes were slipp'd, her gown was worn,

Her skin was foul, her pinners torn,

Yet *Mischief* seem'd to like her;

Near her he pass'd the live-long day,

With kitten's love, would scratch, or play,

Now kiss, and now would strike her.

Her apron was not over strong,

In many a hole and tatter hung,

Unfitted for retention;

And yet they manag'd so like fools,

That it receiv'd all *Mischief's* tools,

Sharp edg'd, or of invention.

The consequence is plain to tell,
No sooner in, than out they fell,
As fire thro' paper passes;
The idiots tofs'd them to and fro,
Now in are hurl'd, now out they go,
Incorrigible asses!

These words were mutter'd by *Disgrace*,
Who follow'd with no tardy pace,
All birds of his own feather;
He swore he would not quit their side,
Till they some wiser means had try'd
To keep their tools together.

Hard at their heels, to close the rear,
March'd gloomy, hollow-ey'd *Despair*,
Pale effigy of sadness;
At his bare breast a serpent hung,
Whose deadly venom round he flung,
In ecstasy of madness!

Here paus'd my Muse—silent her lyre—
Her eyes emitted paler fire,
She snatch'd her verse and tore it;
Serious and awful now her look,
Again the instrument she took,
And swept her fingers o'er it.

I ask'd

I ask'd the cause : she saw me smile :
 I hate, said she, the flippant style
 In which I have been sporting ;
 To suit the tones of *Wisdom's* voice,
 More solid verse shall be my choice,
 Whilst *Honour's* wrongs reporting.—

Serene in majesty, the holy dame,
 Led by the blushing Virtues, onward came ;
 Her steady eyes no objects discompose,
 Tho' blasted by the deadliest of her foes :
 Hissing, they would have push'd her from the door,
 But *Honour's* feet, tho' slow, are always sure ;
 Safely they bore her thro' the clamorous crew,
 Who shew'd less fury, as she bolder grew ;
 With sov'reign contempt she mark'd the crowd,
 The shapeless something kiss'd—to *Justice* bow'd ;
 Before, said she, this *myst'ry* I reveal,
 To *Wisdom*—and to you, I dare appeal——
 More stern she frown'd — and wav'd her sun-
 crown'd head,
 Whose radiant beams were round the circle spread ;
 Less dreadful to the clan eternal gloom,
 Too weak their fight for this illumin'd room ;
 They skulk about, as reptiles fly from day,
 Who but in darkness hunt their sleeping prey.
 Vain were their efforts to escape the light,
 They fly—but, flying, stumble in their flight.

Well

Well might they stumble—*Folly* for their guide,
 Impeded too by all their sins beside ;
 And well might *Time*, who never look'd so gay
 As when in *Honour's* suit—tho' bent—and grey,
 Find strength sufficient, as the traitors fall,
 Their slavish limbs in bondage to enthrall.
 The hosts of *Honour* gather'd round her throne,
 Bysylphs immortal rais'd of jasper stone ;
 Here the envelop'd *sprights* hung round her knees,
 As round the sweetest flow'rs hang honey'd bees.
 Above them, *Justice* sat—stern was his brow,
 The heav'n-born congress all before him bow.
 Unconscious of their homage, he remains
 To worship blind, and deaf to partial strains ;
 His sword unsheath'd, to *Mercy's* hand he gave,
 Both to destroy, where *Mercy's* self could save.
 Through *Mercy's* eyes, foul deeds he would re-
 view,
 And where he could not pardon, only flew !
 But crimes there are, of such infernal dye,
 As *Mercy* cannot see with pity's eye ;
 Some such did in their arms *Falsehood* sustain,
 And many more distinguish'd *Envy's* train ;
 Others, and not a few, of rank there were,
 Who loving all, did yet to one adhere ;
Malice, as *Envy*, and as *Falsehood*, stood,
 Surrounded by a guard of their own brood ;

With

With writhing spite their heavy chains they bore,

And venom drops distill'd from every pore ;

Honour convey'd on them a still rebuke,

That spar'd not commoner, nor lord, nor duke.

Tho' still, it language had ; to each it said,

Is it by you that *Honour* is betray'd ?

You, who have dar'd to call yourself my son !

Is it by you that *Honour* is undone ?

Her fond maternal bosom doom'd to feel

The piercing anguish of your hidden steel ?

Oh ! sacred *Justice*, 'tis on thee I call :

These sons of rapine ! I renounce them all !

Wisdom stood up—Erect his manly form,

His visage, like the ocean free from storm,

Calm—undisturb'd—the culprits he survey'd,

One hand he upwards held, and one display'd

Towards the guilty prisoners at the bar,

To judgment brought—alas ! from Heaven how far !

When *Honour* look'd, and *Wisdom* rose to speak,

The female friends of *Envy* backwards sneak !

Silence cry'd hift ! as *Wisdom's* lips divide,

From whence flow'd eloquence as flows the tide ;

Not like to mortal phrase, or mortal wit,

Divine was on his words and gestures writ ;

Divine.

Divine his voice ! his impulses divine !
Divinity was mark'd on every line !
To *Envy* first, who hung her baneful head,
He thus address'd his speech, and calmly said :
Oh ! thou, who dost thy neighbours' goods despoil,
And fatten on the profits of their toil !
Thou, who dost sicken at another's fame,
And look on other's glory as thy shame !
Thou, who dost stand in corners dark, and gloom,
To snatch from *Virtue's* wreath its fragrant bloom—
To plant deformity where beauty grows,
And overwhelm with weed the taintless rose !
Attend my voice, for thy defence prepare,
'Tis mine, the spoiler, as the spoil'd to hear.
The pris'ner pert and peevishly reply'd,
Demanding by her peers she might be try'd ;
Her friends, she said, with whom she long had liv'd
In friendship's habits, sure must be believ'd ?
Many were present, many more unseen,
That if he meddled, would step in between ;
Would speak to her good name as to their own,
And whose importance pretty well was known !
As to his censure, it was all a joke.
Wisdom turn'd from her, and to *Malice* spoke :
An equal likeness in thy soul I trace,
A semblance strong to *Envy* in thy face;
Like

Like her, I know, thou boldly wilt disown
The awful Ruler that commands me down;
Supreme in justice, as in love supreme!
By *Wisdom's* voice he would your souls redeem;
His love can heal, or justice point the dart,
Who kisses not the rod shall rue the smart!
Chiefly to thee, malignant *Malice*, I'm sent,
To seal thy pardon, or thy punishment:
'Gainst thee has *Honour* lifted up her eyes;
'Gainst thee has utter'd loud and piteous cries!
Her wrongs and her complaints have pierc'd that
veil,
Which does, from sight Omnipotence conceal!
If thou dost hear my voice, and cease to spread
Thy fabricated nets for Virtue laid,
Leave off thy fruitless efforts to o'erthrow
The perfect steps of Innocence below;
To ravage and lay waste, depress, betray!
So thy offences shall be done away.
But tremble for that vengeance which attends
Who of malicious wickedness offends!—
Malice look'd round, and answer'd with a sneer,
Shall I, supported thus, submit to fear?
A glance met hers from every female eye,
Impregnated with dearest sympathy:
Silent, but strong, it sanction'd her conceit—
Who fights for *Malice*, never will retreat!

In

In vain was *Wisdom's* eloquence display'd;
 To batter *Falshood's* front, he next essay'd —
 Infernal *Falshood*, smiling mischief fair!
 Thy heart deform'd, thy language insincere,
 Long with thy *Sisters* hast thou been combin'd
 To injure *Honour*, and enslave mankind:
 Who after *Envy*, *Malice*, *Falshood* run
 To ruin others, are themselves undone!
 Thousands on thousands are by those misled,
 And fill the net themselves for others spread:
 To suffering *Virtue*, say, wilt thou restore
 The treasure thou hast stolen, and sin no more?
 The sword of *Justice* hangs above thy head!
 Dost thou say Guilty, or, Not guilty plead?
 Some Nobles of the realm now forward stood,
 Endear'd to *Falshood* more by choice, than blood,
 And ere the quick-forg'd lie had from her tongue
 Escap'd, the blister'd lips on which it hung,
 Anticipating what she would have said,
 Not guilty! cry'd—then turn'd their backs and
 fled—

Not guilty! echo'd in a cringing strain,
 Each dirty link that great to little chain;
Wisdom re-echoes back the partial sound,
 Repeats, Not guilty! with an air profound—
 Not guilty, Lords!—Not guilty, sirs! he cries,
 Reproach stood station'd in his voice, and eyes—

To Heav'n your evidence we shall transmit,
Heav'n must approve ! or you in vain acquit ;
Your evidence must pass that high ordeal,
From whose decision there is no appeal ;
Justice will make a faithful, true report,
And send up minutes from his awful court,
See where he sits array'd in Heav'n's own state,
To execute his will, whose will is Fate !
Let now the injur'd party forward stand,
Rehearse her wrongs, fearless her rights demand !
Such were his words, his graces who can tell ?
Wisdom himself did his own grace excel.
So *Honour* thought, and rising from her throne,
Obedience paid to him, and him alone ;
Next on *Religion* fix'd her steady eye,
To *Justice* then look'd up, and heav'd a sigh !
From all but them, unstudious of applause,
She, as commanded, open'd thus her cause :—
The glare of Vice I shun, yet love broad day ;
My steps are lonely, private is my way ;
Content with *Fortitude* my spouse to dwell,
Whether it be in palace, house, or cell ;
At present we inhabit, 'tis our lot,
A pleasant, homely, unfrequented cot ;
One path to Fame leads travellers by my door,
Lovely, and safe, but few that path explore ;

The

The multitude a shorter cut have found,
Attaining which, they trespass on my ground;
In vain I point the finger out to shew
Which leads to Happiness, and which to Woe:
Onwards they rush, regardless of the ill,
By Pleasure cheer'd, and captives to Self-will;
With these your prisoners, by your pow'rs restrain'd,
From friendship and from commerce I refrain'd;
With impious mirth my dictates they deride,
With impious scorn from *Honour* turn aside:
A thousand outrages I could repeat,
But rest we now on that for which we meet.
This *Mystery*, my Lords—again she sigh'd,
The shapeless spectre with affection ey'd—
This *Mystery*, my Lords, must be unveil'd,
Heaven can disclose it—human strength has fail'd!
Beneath this covering, this cloth of fear,
Entomb'd is *Innocence*! more sweet, more fair,
Than loathsome foul, the case that does enshrine
The sacred maid, half mortal, half divine!
Prudence, my sister, gave the darling birth,
Earth-born her father, and return'd to earth!
Rock'd in my arms, the artless infant grew
In soul celestial, beauteous to the view;
With dutiful adherence she repaid
My tender love, and all my laws obey'd;

Of this adopted child, so fondly rear'd,
 Alike to *Fortitude* as me endear'd,
 Our youngest offspring *Peace*——see where he
 stands,
 Weeping her loss, and wringing his soft hands !
 Ordained husband, so we had decreed,
 For all that was immortal of the maid,
 Union of souls, a marriage sanctified,
 Which nought but witchcraft could have set aside !
 Her lovely form, subject to mortal harms,
 To sickness, death, and unforeseen alarms,
 Ask'd mortal shelter from the storms of life,
 A husband worthy of so sweet a wife—
 A husband, friend, and lover, all in one,
 Who, loving her, would love but her alone :—
 Such be the man, I pray'd, and pray'd intense,
 Who weds the human form of *Innocence* !—
 When lower'd to earth, with *Prudence* for her guide,
 I bade *Experience* not to quit their side,
 A faithful servant, in my service bred,
 Of penetration scarce to be misled !
 Besides these guardians—I their ways did spy,
 And watch'd their progress with a jealous eye,
 Saw with delight how *Innocence* did go,
 How her chaste influence brighten'd all below.
 Mean time, to cheat the sand that heavy ran
 Of irksome separation, I began

A nuptial garb to weave for her fair frame,
And gave it *Reputation* for its name;
Fine the materials, of transcendent white,
The gloss superior, durable as bright.
This pleasing task perform'd, with anxious care
The curious web upon my breast I wear,
Not more to keep it out of *Envy's* way,
And save it from becoming *Falsehood's* prey,
Than to preserve it from the tainting air
That *Malice* breathes on all that's good or fair.
The work completed, and the hours beguil'd,
I look'd, and long'd, for my adopted child;
Peace, smiling, prattled of his little wife,
And watch'd with me, her graceful steps through
 life;
Saw in the maze of *Dissipation's* walk,
With *Prudence* and *Experience* she did talk;
Heard her in gentle strains their counsel seek,
Saw on their bosoms she reclin'd her cheek,
Charms mortal and immortal so combin'd,
So strongly knit, were scarce to be defin'd.
Peace saw his destin'd bride, without alarms,
Court'd to take a rival to her arms;
No selfish fears, no passionate disgust,
Deform'd the soul of *Peace*, all there was hush'd.
A human rival—his was love divine,
Oh! be, he cry'd, his love as pure as mine!

And *Peace* shall bless him to his latest breath,
 My ties with *Innocence* commence in death;
 Beyond the grave all rivals I subdue,
 There will our joys be ever firm and new,
 Through realms of bliss, as wand'ring side by side,
 No fiend shall *Peace* and *Innocence* divide!

Here *Honour* paus'd—and with a dying look
 Deep groan'd, as health her blooming cheeks
 forlook;

Strong feelings from her vitals turn'd the flood,
 Back forc'd the torrent of her sanguine blood,
 Whilst phoenix-like, in her own flame she glows,
 A brighter phoenix from her efforts rose;

Her eyes express re-activated fires,
 Her voice new tones, new energy acquires;

Behold! she said, her vision cast on high,

As if to call down thunder from the sky—

Behold, oh Thou! Omnipotent, Supreme!

In whom all live, all move, and have their being!

From whom nor good nor evil is obscur'd,

By evil dreaded, by the good ador'd,

Behold my conflicts! be my fortress still,

To thy unerring wisdom bend my will!

But for thy ready help, my strength had fail'd,

As I the wrongs of *Innocence* reveal'd;

Such wrongs, I know, thy judgment will pursue,

And all her blasted charms with life renew!—

The hand of *Peace* she seiz'd, as thus she pray'd,
And drew him nearer to the spell-bound maid,
Who, tho' by magic hid, and wrapt in shame,
Shewed vibration as he closer came.
Honour of *Justice* patience did invoke,
And thus re-knit the charge her grief had broke :
Besides that *Envy*, in the broad of day,
Contriv'd to steal my precious web away,
And after with her *Sisters* did depart,
Bearing their spoil—how conjur'd from my heart,
By arts invisible, to me unknown,
Let *Justice* ask—and let the culprits own !
Besides this theft of which I now complain,
Observe these reptiles who compose the train
Of *Envy's* suite, and bow to *Malice* down,
Pay court to *Falsehood*, and on *Merit* frown !
They carv'd for *Innocence* so hard a fate,
As they alone unfeeling could relate.
Less harden'd souls with penitential dew
Had wash'd away the stains their malice threw !
My charge ends here—let *Prudence* now report
Before this high, this Heav'n-appointed Court,
And let *Experience* join her evidence,
To prove what harms are done to *Innocence*.
She said, then silent heard the just command ;
Prudence advanc'd, sustain'd by *Truth's* fair hand.
But

But ere she speaks, halt! and with patience view,
 What tricks were practis'd by the dastard crew;
 The burning torch which *Observation* held,
 From whose detecting light could be conceal'd
 Nor word nor action, that did tend to shed
 Destruction on the unprotected head
 Of *Innocence*; nothing escap'd unseen
 By *Observation* strong, of vision keen;
 He saw when *Honour* did her charge unfold,
 The *Reputation* stolen, lamenting told;
 He saw lean *Envy* privately convey
 From hand to hand the web so stolen away,
 From fair to fair, all anxious to conceal
 Another's crime, which must their own reveal;
 Pupils of *Malice*, slaves to *Envy* bred,
 Handmaids to *Falsehood*, by her dictates led;
 This truth they strongly felt, that shame attends
 Not only *Vice* itself, but *Vice's* friends.
Silence on *Observation* forced his laws;
 He too had mark'd their motions, saw the cause
 Of all their shuffling tricks, their guilty fears,
 But, seeing all things, uninform'd appears.
 His eyes pursu'd the web, his open ear
 To *Prudence* turn'd, whose accents, mild and clear,
 Pleas'd all they touch'd—But *Fashion's* motley
 crew,
 Ashew'd of mocking taunts round *Prudence* threw.

She said with steady voice and modest mien,
Honour, my sister, and most gracious queen,
Ordain'd, that I with *Innocence* come down,
From higher regions to this favour'd town,
Meaning, my daughter being young and fair,
If well receiv'd, should be establish'd here.
Her father, rest his ashes, he is gone!
Two parents once she had!—now has but one!
Alas! her feeble sweetness could I guard!
The task I undertook; but sure too hard
For me it was, who am so little known,
And less belov'd by those to pleasure prone!
Through roseate paths the artless maid I led,
No step without me did she ever tread.
Her beauteous form at first delights them all,
Praises and benedictions round her fall.
To dress, to look like her, the females try,
And mock the language of her tongue and eye;
To copy outward charms, oh! how intense!
Unmark'd, th' internal grace of *Innocence*!
Had they her gentle nature made their own,
Like her, had sympathy or pity known;
Their machinations had not cross'd her way—
Who learn her dictates, never can betray!
White was her robe, and lily white her hand,
Not, like her foes, in semblance only bland!

Their

Their hands, their hearts unclean, for mischief ripe,
Yellow their hue, of jealousy the type;
Friendship they utter'd loud, but whisper'd hate,
Call'd her divine! but gave her mortal fate!
To make their garb like hers, in vain they toil,
And what they could not rival, try'd to spoil.
It happ'd, in consequence of this decree,
As *Innocence* walk'd on upheld by me,
That on her vestment drops of poison fell,
But from what quarter she nor I could tell;
Of ink the colour, tho' it left no stain,
Touching the garment hem, off dropp'd again.
With anxious doubts the presage I survey'd,
And saw with sorrow *Innocence* dismay'd.
Experience shook her head, bade us beware,
And said, each smiling face conceal'd a snare.
No face there was but smil'd on *Innocence*,
Yet not one hand was rais'd in her defence;
When magic spells the hapless victim bound,
And laid her speechless on the hard cold ground!
What could *Experience* do?—Against those harms
That Sorcery invents, she has no charms!
Deform'd as now you see, wrapp'd up in fear,
To *Honour* we convey'd the stricken deer:
In *Honour's* arms we felt returning heat,
Felt through the sackcloth her slow pulses beat;

Honour

Honour exerted all her skill, and try'd
 The victim from the witchcraft to divide;
 But try'd in vain—no skill nor strength would do—
 Heav'n's aid to supplicate, to Heav'n she flew:
 My suffering spell-bound child she left behind,
 On *Fortitude* the mis-shap'd form reclin'd.
Religion's voice she heard; it pierc'd her ear,
 But the sweet tones of *Peace* she could not hear!
 Now *Prudence* closed her evidence—and sigh'd,
 Whilst many a cheek in conscious red was dy'd;
Wisdom appear'd wrapp'd up in thought profound,
 He paus'd—then cast detecting glances round—
 Saw *Malice* mute—saw *Envy* melancholy—
 He mark'd them all, but chiefly notic'd *Folly*;
 Whose quirks and tricks, whose uncontroul'd grimace,
 Idiot importance, vacant,, grinning face,
 Spoke her in office, and the confidence,
 Of those who tortur'd injur'd *Innocence*;
 Then call'd her to the bar; where she betray'd
 Whatever *Malice* did, or *Envy* said,
 Which mark'd a page of crimes, so dark, so deep,
 That tho' by *Folly* blazon'd, some did weep;
 All that to *Innocence* were aught allied,
 Her foes grew pale, and turn'd their heads aside,
 As feeling shame, altho' to boldness prone,
 Not for their crimes—but that their crimes were
 known.

No longer *Justice* could his wrath command,
He snatch'd the sword from *Mercy's* trembling
hand:

But ere it fell, tremendous thunders roll,
And forked lightning flash'd from pole to pole.
Awe-stricken! *Justice* listen'd to the sound,
Then cry'd, 'Tis done! be *Innocence* unbound!
Be all her griefs, her suff'rings hence forgot!
He said, and cut in two th' enchanted knot;
From hands profane the pilfer'd web he drew,
And round cold *Innocence* the mantle threw;
'Tis done! arise! renew'd are all thy charms!
Blushing the rose, and rush'd to *Honour's* arms!
From *Honour's* arms, *Peace* caught her to his heart,
And smiling cry'd, Henceforth we never part!

THE END.

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